

THE MERMAID  
by  
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September 24, 1983

# WHITE FILLS THE SCREEN

There are o.s. shouts of 'we got it, we got it' and excited chatter - all of it fighting wind and the SNAP and CREAK of things unseen. The numbers 9733 glide across the screen, stitched to the huge sail.

The sail SNAPS and BILLOWS away from CAMERA, moving forward and revealing the starboard side of a sleek yawl, the ICEMAN.

At the wheel is KEN GAER. He points to a rival yacht downwind and about thirty meters off the starboard stern:

GAER

Cover her ass like a blanket, go, go, go guys!

# THE ICEMAN

heels into the wind of the approaching rival yacht, moving closer to her.

# ON THE RIVAL YACHT MAYNARD DIXON

elegant but a bit hapless at the wheel, spins it into a blur:

MAYNARD

Coming about, watch it! watch it!  
watch it!

He's failed to take his own advice - first losing control of the wheel he's spun and second - nearly getting beheaded by the boom - a heroic crew member LEAPS across the deck, preventing decapitation - only Maynard's yachting cap is lost to the boom - ending up floating off the starboard beam for moments before it's lost beneath the sea.

# MAYNARD'S YACHT

has tried to move away from the impending suffocation of the ICEMAN'S sails, without much success. A few hundred yards off starboard at about eleven o'clock, the finish line, ROCA BOTAR, can be glimpsed. It's a dramatic slate grey formation jutting out of the sea a little like a ship under sail itself - this illusion heightened by the snow-capped millenia of pelican shit which adds to the illusion of a sail.

THE COMMITTEE BOAT

opposite ROCA BOTAR, waits, its members watching the boat for boat finish, putting down cocktails and clasping stopwatches, rising to watch the dramatic finish.

FAY DIXON

a wicked looking five-year-old in a pink sailor suit, stands next to her mother Nancy, and her Aunt Joan, solemnly taking in the race.

FAY

Daddy lost his hat.

JOAN

(looking thru binoculars)  
That's not all he's lost - honestly  
Nancy it's a big enough risk allowing  
Maynard behind the wheel of a car -

AT THE HELM THE COMMITTEE BOAT SKIPPER

lowers binoculars and picks up the large horn that will blast out the winner.

WITH MAYNARD ON HIS YACHT AS THE SAILS

are beginning to flap. Maynard can only look at the floppy sails, unable to answer the frenzied pleas of his crew.

GAER ABOARD THE ICEMAN

winks at Martini as both are amused by Dixon's predicament.

FROM ROCA BOTAR

the two boats come directly toward CAMERA, Gaer's ICEMAN

heeling at an ever-sharpening angle, leaning into the wind, cutting it off from Maynard's yacht, which continues to lose its angle, moving to the perpendicular.

GAER ON THE ICEMAN

continues to be amused at Maynard's becalmed predicament, in control of his own ship and crew.

ON THE COMMITTEE BOAT FAY

has been looking glum at her Daddy's predicament, near tears. Suddenly, however, a little smile begins to play across her face.

BACK ON THE ICEMAN

Gaer has barely turned back to the helm when he hears a distinct flapping. Huggins, a crew member near him, hears it as well:

GAER

Huggins, it's not possible!

Both men look overhead in disbelief:

A FLACCID JIB

is accompanied by the growing cries of Gaer's confused crew, 'what the hell happened? we've lost it, we're dead in the water, etc.'

WITH MAYNARD

staring at the flaccid jib and the suddenly becalmed ICEMAN just ahead of him. He's amazed.

GAER FRANTICALLY SHOUTS

commands to his crew, in some effort to restore wind to the sails. As he does, he hears a sudden series of squeaks.

THREE DOLPHINS

leap off the starboard stern, pull alongside Gaer, right next to the boat.

GAER

stares down at them, only a few feet away.

THE DOLPHINS

slip thru the mint green like comic torpedoes and cant at the same moment so three eyes stare up at Gaer. With their squeaks and fixed smiles they seem to be giving him some kind of raspberry. Suddenly they squeak excitedly, cant back, and sound into the sea. There is a loud MOAN that seems to sweep across the deck. Gaer looks up, shocked:

THE SPINNAKER

is now completely LIMP, as if the last of the wind had been sucked out of the air. Suddenly there is a loud and ringing SNAP.

GAER AND HUGGINS ON ICEMAN CONTD

THE SPINNAKER ON MAYNARD'S YACHT

fairly BURSTS with wind. Maynard and his crew are stunned by it.

GAER AND HIS CREW

look from his becalmed sail at the rival yacht only meters away, beginning to heel under the bursting sails, its prow lacing the sea with foam, its crew going wild with enthusiasm as they begin to draw even with Gaer, preparing to pass him.

Gaer overcomes his astonishment, and tries to rally his crew.

FROM ROCA BOTAR

Maynard's yacht now approaches at an ever sharpening angle.

FAY ON THE COMMITTEE BOAT

is jumping up and down with glee. Joan slowly lowers the binoculars, not at all amused.

THE TWO YACHTS

are now racing even, but the difference in the angle of the boats, because of the wind bursting the sails of one boat, and only toying with the sails on Gaer's yacht - is only momentary. Maynard's yacht breaks the imaginary plane between the committee boat and Roca Botar, and sails on slicing thru the water speedily, leaving Gaer foundering, not quite making it to the finish line.

THE HORN BELLOWS

out Maynard's victory.

GAER CAN ONLY WATCH

as Maynard is mobbed by his crew on the victorious boat.

There is another series of squeaks. Gaer turns toward the noise.

THE THREE DOLPHINS

are lazing on the surface near Roca Botar, seeming to bask in the sun and in Gaer's consternation and confusion over the race.

GAER AND HIS CREW ON ICEMAN AT FINISH LINE CONTD

GAER STARES

down at the dolphins, quietly hating them, shaking his head. As they squeak insolently, he looks slowly back up to his flaccid jib.

A SURGE OF SEA

rises and crashes thru the kelp bed around Roca Botar, rising into a fine luminous mist that momentarily creates a halo around the rock. Thru the mist, DISSOLVE, as the flash of a dolphin SOUNDING seems to look almost like some other kind of animal - sinewy, sensuous, then - WITH the sound of a cork POPPING, CUT TO:

A SHOWER OF CHAMPAGNE

bubbles like sea foam over a MERMAID carved out of ice, languidly lying on an icy representation of the boat race's finish line - ROCA BOTAR.

The icy sculpture itself is surrounded by a bed of sea-green ice chips in which are embedded various trophies - a large and elegant silver cup for the overall winner of the VANCOUVER-ROCA BOTAR race, and a fleet of lesser trophies for runners-up in various classes, for LAST BOAT TO FINISH, for BEST COOK, etc.

HUGGINS WITH GAER AND JOAN BY THE ICE MERMAID AT THE POST-RACE PARTY (BALBOA BAY CLUB)

stares solemnly at the trophies while Gaer fills his glass with champagne.

HUGGINS

...never saw anything..like it.

JOAN

(politely)

Really?

HUGGINS

(somewhere between glum and miserable)

Never. Never, Kenny.

He downs the champagne. Gaer nods, pours more for him.

Sept. 24, 1983

6.

INT BALBOA BAY CLUB GAER, HUGGINS, JOAN AT POST RACE PARTY  
(CONTD)

MAYNARD DIXON

is congratulated by the only man in the room wearing a suit, Senator George Distal, who knifes thru a crowd of well-wishers roiling around Maynard - crew members, club members, his wife Nancy.

DISTAL

Congratulations, Maynard -  
(giving Nancy a kiss)  
- he really cleaned old Kenny's clock, didn't he?

NANCY

(not amused by politicians)  
Not really. It was a boat for boat finish.

DISTAL

Well he won, and against Kenny.

NANCY

Let's put it this way, George. He didn't lose.

DISTAL

Nancy, why do you always insist on being so relentlessly truthful?

NANCY

Not truthful - just honest. It's a dirty job, Senator -  
(just a touch pointed)  
- but somebody has to do it. Excuse me, I've misplaced my daughter.

Nancy starts to take off. Distal takes hold of her arm. Nancy glances down at Distal's hand. He removes it.

DISTAL

(quiet concern)  
How's Mother taking all this?

NANCY

'Mother?' How's she taking what?

INT BALBOA BAY CLUB POST RACE CELEBRATION NANCY, DISTAL  
CONTD

DISTAL

The marina.

(Nancy stares at him)

- it's my understanding she doesn't  
want it built - at least that's what  
Kenny tells me.

NANCY

Well - Ken's the project developer.  
He's in touch with her on a daily  
basis - I certainly can't tell you any  
more that he can. Why would you want  
to know how Mother feels about it?

DISTAL

(carefully)

Well, Dorothy Webster means something  
to all of us on the Coastal Commission  
- after all she's quite a fixture  
around here -

DOROTHY'S VOICE

' - quite a fixture?' Sounds like  
you're talking about an electric  
heater or something that belongs in a  
bathroom wall - hello George -

(to Nancy)

- your daughter's rolling a rubber  
worm up and down the stairs and my ass  
is dragging trying to keep up with her  
- why don't you try for a while?

NANCY

Ma, you know I don't have as much  
energy as you -

DOROTHY

Knock it off sweetie, and give me a  
break -

Nancy nods, pats her mother and takes off. Dorothy  
breathes a kind of 'whew' of relief.

DISTAL

Are you all right, Dorothy?

DOROTHY

- of course...you know how kids can  
wear you out. Excuse me -



INT BALBOA BAY CLUB DOROTHY GAER AND JOAN ETC

DOROTHY

moves away - toward Gaer and Joan, leaving Maynard who has been in a flush of non-stop recitativ about his race, how he caught the wind and Gaer lost it, the burdens of command, difficulties of split-second decisions - it's tough and lonely at the helm, etc.

MOVING WITH DOROTHY

to Nancy and Joan who are now alone by the icy mermaid.

DOROTHY

Hi kids, where's Kenny?

NANCY

(indicating outside)

With Fay.

JOAN

Why?..Why, Mother?

DOROTHY

I want him to chat a little with Senator Distal.

JOAN

About the marina?

DOROTHY

More or less.

JOAN

What about the marina?

DOROTHY

(to Nancy)

Kenny's outside?

NANCY

On the stairs.

THE RUBBER WORM

(actually a suggestive balloon that looks like an uncircumsized condom and is filled with water) rolls and worms its way down step after step to the marina quai and yacht slips below.

EXT BALBOA BAY CLUB GAER, FAY

FAY CHASES

the squirmy worm down the steps. It hits the marina walkway and rolls toward the slips, just beyond Fay's grasp. She screeches as it's about to roll off the quai and into the water.

GAER'S FOOT

stops the errant worm at the last moment, just before it rolls off the edge. He reaches down and picks it up gingerly, hands it to Fay.

GAER, FAY AND HUGGINS ON QUAI SLIPS FG BAY CLUB BG

~~GAER  
You're going to lose that if you're  
not careful, Fay - it's a real  
slippery worm.~~

Gaer sits with Huggins on some low pilings, a bottle of champagne between the two of them. Fay looks at the worm, thinks about this.

FAY  
I have a good idea.

GAER  
Yeah?

FAY  
You stay right here so it can't go in  
the water, okay? okay?

GAER  
Sure, honey.

Fay bounces back up the stairs.

HUGGINS  
You realize this is the most useful  
job you've had in three years.

Gaer looks at Huggins a little archly - then holds up his champagne glass. Huggins pours some more champagne.

HUGGINS  
Building that marina sucks - sideways.

GAER FAY AND HUGGINS ON QUAI SLIPS FG BAY CLUB BG CONTD

GAER

Yeah?

HUGGINS

Yeah - it's too goddam much dredging -  
you're gonna mess up five miles of  
coastline.

GAER

- yeah..well, it's a dirty job -  
(both)
- but somebody has to do it.  
(they laugh, then:)
- what the hell. It's a living.

Gaer stops the rubber worm. Hands it to Fay again.

HUGGINS

- I think it's more like dying.

This stops Gaer. There's a sufficient edge in Huggins' voice that the drunken levity has a slightly menacing quality.

GAER

What would you suggest I do?

HUGGINS

Build another boat.

GAER

Build another boat?

HUGGINS

That's what I said.

GAER

Design another boat?

HUGGINS

Yeah, well before you build it that's  
probably a good idea.

GAER

(quietly furious)

Then what?

HUGGINS

Then what?

EXT MARINA QUAI GAER AND HUGGINS ON PILINGS CONTD

GAER

Yeah. Then what?

HUGGINS

Then you sail it. You win some races, and then you sell it. Sell the design.

GAER

The design doesn't mean a goddam thing. When Maynard can take me because I lose some pissant puff of wind -

Gaer stops the rubber worm. Hands it to Fay.

GAER

- the design doesn't mean a goddam thing. Wind blew rigging off out deck!...it was everywhere - everywhere but the sails...

HUGGINS

(nods gravely)

..well..that...happens..

GAER

(slightly indignant)

- no. No this was too blatant -

HUGGINS

- 'too blatant?'

GAER

- like it was trying to tell us something - shoot craps or play blackjack - anything requires more skill than sailing - let's build the goddam marina and stop kidding ourselves - any puff of wind means more than we do, you know?

Huggins looks at Gaer

HUGGINS

..I wish I'dve said that.

This time Huggins picks up the worm and holds onto it, looks around.

EXT MARINA QUAI GAER AND HUGGINS CONTD

HUGGINS

- where's Fay?

GAER

Why? Why did you want to say that?

JOAN'S VOICE

Kenny, Mother wants you to talk to  
Senator Distal.

Gaer looks up lazily to see Joan.

GAER

Hi, honey. I'm sure I will.

JOAN

(lowers her voice, pointedly  
polite:)

- Kenny we want those three hundred  
extra slips.

GAER

(amiably)

Yeah, well we're not going to get 'em  
tonight, believe me.

JOAN

You seem awfully cavalier about this.  
Don't you think you should say  
something to Distal?

GAER

(pleasantly)

What for? his committee voted Friday  
- he couldn't change the vote tonight  
if his life depended on it - we'll  
know one way or another tomorrow, it's  
in the bag or it isn't, honey. Face  
it.

Joan wants to be able to argue with this line of reasoning,  
but can't. Finally:

JOAN

Then let me put it this way - we'd  
like to find out if we have them  
tonight - I'll talk to him.

She turns away.

EXT MARINA QUAI GAER HUGGINS JOAN CONTD

GAER

(a little sharply)

Honey!...that I wouldn't do.

JOAN

(walks slowly back,  
suspiciously)

Why not? why not? why not, Kenny?

GAER

Because Distal asked me a half hour ago if I'd make sure he wouldn't have to listen to you hustle him tonight..

Joan looks from Gaer to Huggins holding the rubber worm, then back to Gaer.

JOAN

I wonder - is Ned in any condition to drive you home?

GAER

Why?

JOAN

Because I don't want to wait around while you win a runner-up trophy - I'd like to take the car and go home.

GAER

Well, honey, don't worry about Ned, here - even if he can't get off that piling. I don't want to come in late and wake you up - I'll stay on the boat tonight.

ON THE STERN

of a lush cabin cruiser called the JOLLY ROGER a barbecue sizzles and smokes away at some sea bass. A Grecian formula man in a baby blue jump suit and oilcloth apron that says "I'M ON A SEAFOOD DIET - I SEE FOOD AND I EAT IT" spritzes the coals with lighter fluid. Another well fed man in his late fifties in pastels swivels lazily in a Marlin chair and sips his cocktail. The coals have flamed up from the lighter fluid and two bits of youthful flotsam - both girls at least twenty-five years younger than the men, both sporting Flashdance sweatshirts - poke their heads out from the cabin at the flames - they are NORMA and CANDY.

EXT ON THE JOLLY ROGER STERN TWO MEN, NORMA, CANDY CONTD

NORMA

Jesus, Lenny what're you doing?

CANDY

(brightening, calling out)

- hey Kenny, where've you been?

GAER SITS STOCK STILL

on the deck of his adjacent yawl, an empty champagne glass dangling from his hand, about as animated as something from a wax museum. Martini is sitting on the cabin behind Gaer grunting as he tries to twist the top off a beer can. Gaer manages a shrug and a smile.

GAER

- Vancouver.

(to Martini)

That's not a twist off top, Martini. You're gonna hurt yourself. Why don't you get a bottle opener?

CANDY

What were you guys doing?

GAER

Sailing - you know, the race.

CANDY

Oh yeah - how'd you do?

GAER

Runner up.

CANDY

(brightly)

Hey - congratulations - how about something to eat?

Lenny can be heard grumbling. Gaer smiles, shakes his head. Candy shouts something like, 'talk to you later', and Gaer nods - looks up to see Huggins - wet, disheveled, and very greasy -

Barbecue fumes have begun to drift across the deck.

HUGGINS

I checked the steering linkage. It was kinda stiff so I oiled it..

EXT GAER'S YACHT GAER AND HUGGINS CONTD (NIGHT)

Gaer nods. This last - from Huggins' clothes - is obvious.

GAER

- you're blowin' smoke up your ass.

HUGGINS

(mildly surprised)

I am?

GAER

You are. How's the steering linkage gonna help when there's no wind?

HUGGINS

..look, I admit what happened out there was unusual..

GAER

(indignant)

Unusual? unusual?

HUGGINS

(interrupting)

- Very unusual, but not the first time something's taken the wind out of your sails - that happens, you know? It's just something you can't take anymore.

GAER

Oh yeah? Why's that?

HUGGINS

Kenny, you've always been lucky when it comes to sailing -

GAER

- I don't want to hear that again -

HUGGINS

Yeah? well luck isn't dumb. It isn't being born with big tits.

GAER

Who said it was?



EXT GAER'S YACHT HUGGINS AND GAER CONTD (NIGHT)

HUGGINS

(a flash of real anger)

- it's loving something so much you figure it can't hurt you!...(indicating ocean) - even when it can. I don't think you love anything that much anymore so you're..not quite as lucky - aw hell. See you tomorrow, Kenny.

Huggins turns and heads off the deck. As he's reached the side and is halfway down the ladder:

GAER

Ned!...why is that?

HUGGINS

Why is what?

GAER

....Why don't I?

HUGGINS

Jesus, Kenny, what don't you love in your life? There must be something ...you don't really want me to get specific, do you?

The two men stare at one another - Gaer finally and almost imperceptibly shakes his head.

HUGGINS

(a whisper across the deck)

- I told Martini to leave a couple of joints on the galley table. Why don't you smoke a little and get some sleep? do you good.

Gaer looks at him, nods - rises slowly and heads toward the cabin.

INT GALLEY MARTINI

has been rummaging around, has every bit of crockery and silverware out, still holding the beer bottle in hand.

GAER

(swaying in)

Martini, what the hell're you doing?

INT GALLEY MARTINI AND GAER CONTD

MARTINI

Bottle opener.

Gaer takes the beer bottle and opens it on a wall opener that is right by Martini's side - and right under his nose. Gaer pointedly hands the bottle to Martini.

MARTINI

Thanks, Kenny.

Gaer nods. Martini looks around for something - for poise if nothing else. He spots the sleek dark model of a ship, picks it up, and turns it over.

MARTINI

This is the new design you and Ned're working on? Kenny? Kenny?

Gaer has opened one of the galley portholes by way of reply. He then turns, takes the model out of Martini's hand and tosses it out the porthole. There is an o.s. splash.

GAER

(to an astonished Martini)  
- yep. That's it. I just need a little sleep, okay Martini?

MARTINI

(leaving, still stunned)  
Sure, sure - gee I'm sorry, Kenny.

GAER

What for?

Gaer slumps down at the galley table. Martini stares uncertainly at his back - then heads up the companionway and out of SHOT.

DISSOLVE TO:

GAER'S POV THE MAST CLOUDED WITH SMOKE

It arcs across the screen and across the moon. The smoke clears. The moon is snowy crisp - there are those little creaks and squeaks that - along with the rocking mast - make the boat sound like a living thing.

More smoke. A sigh. Then the gently plangent sounds of something surfacing in the water off the prow.

GAER'S POV THE MAST CLOUDED WITH SMOKE. CONTD

GAER'S VOICE

- boy oh boy,  
(coughing from joint)  
..so I'm not so lucky, so what?... I'll  
never get over it..

FEMALE VOICE

Over what?

SIDE ANGLE ON GAER

eyes nearly closed, exhaling smoke.

GAER

- the wind, the way we lost it -

Gaer's eyes slowly open - he realizes he's answered a question that's been spoken out loud. He cocks his head toward the sea.

GAER

Candy? that you?

The wet and glistening head and bare shoulders of a young woman glide into frame, f.g. The glare is too much and Gaer squints and shields his eyes.

FEMALE

- it was unusual, I must say.

GAER

(more liveliness)

You saw the end of the race?

FEMALE

Oh yes.

An arm rises out of the water with grace and precision. When the hand clasps the gunwhale there's a sound almost like suction.

This interests Gaer. He rises to one elbow. Almost animatedly:

GAER

How about that shit? ever seen  
anything like it? Ever?.. well,  
okay, 'ever's' a long time.

EXT DECK OF GAER'S BOAT GAER AND FEMALE (NIGHT) CONTD

FEMALE

'Ever' is no time at all.

GAER

You know what I mean. Where were you watching the race from anyway? - the committee boat?

(squinting)

- boy oh boy, do you look different with your hair wet.

Gaer looks another moment, then lies back on the deck and laughs.

FEMALE

What's so funny?

GAER

Ned... ~~'when you're filled with love there'll always be wind in your sails'~~  
~~sounds like something he ought to~~  
~~whistle on a plaque - well, what the~~  
hell - you know Ned.

FEMALE

Not really. Not as well as I know you.

GAER

(oddly amused)

- oh? what makes you think you know me?

FEMALE

I know how you feel.

GAER

(this amuses him once more)

Oh yeah? How's that, honey?

FEMALE

-that neither your skill nor your talent affected the outcome of the race, and under the circumstances you'd feel just as cheated if you'd won - honey.

Gaer sits up again, staring a little openmouthed in her direction.

EXT DECK OF GAER'S BOAT GAER AND FEMALE (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

- well - that's a little on the nose  
but - why quibble with clarity?  
Listen, you talk to Lenny like this?

FEMALE

How about a swim?

GAER

(a lazy smile crosses his  
face and he slowly shakes  
his head)

- too cold.

He lies back.

FEMALE

Not necessarily.

She's cupped her hands and spritzed him with a ten-foot  
needle spray that arcs across the deck and smacks into his  
forehead. Gaer sits up, impressed.

GAER

You're pretty good at that.

FEMALE

Oh, I'm good with water.

She spritzes him again. He tries to dodge it and laughs  
when the perfect needle spray follows him around the deck  
with unerring accuracy and eery length.

FEMALE

- and I'm going to get you wet no  
matter where you are.

Gaer stops trying to dodge the spray. The spray stops. He  
squints with growing fascination and slowly slips out of  
his towel and off the deck, easing carefully into the water  
and holding the joint high to keep it from getting wet.

GAER

(almost a whisper)

Listen, I've got a confession to make-  
(as the water hits his

waist)

- hey, it's warmer than I thought -  
actually I have no idea which one  
you are.

EXT DECK OF GAER'S BOAT GAER AND FEMALE (NIGHT) CONTD

THE FEMALE'S FACE

can now be glimpsed in the cross of range lights playing on the water. Her eyes are particularly bright, even dazzling.

THE FEMALE

Guess.

With that she dives beneath the surface, and as she does there is the distinct and luminous flash of a slinky tail, glistening from her navel on down as it slides beneath the surface, trailing a few phosphorescent bubbles.

GAER

grabs onto the gunwhale of the boat. Perspiration instantly breaks out on his face. He stares at the spot in the water for a moment, then looks to the joint he holds elevated in his left hand. He carefully puts the head of it under the water's surface. It quietly sizzles. The MERMAID resurfaces. Gaer continues to stare at the spot where she dove, even tho she's a few yards from it now.

MERMAID

(noticing Gaer's clutching the gunwhale)

- you all right?...warm enough? I can make it warmer.

Gaer looks slowly from the surface to her. He holds up the soggy joint.

GAER

Listen, you didn't do any of this shit, did you?

MERMAID

No. Why?

GAER

(realizing it's impossible)

It's just - Never mind. You'd never believe what I just saw.

MERMAID

What?

GAER

Doesn't matter. It doesn't matter.

EXT GAER'S BOAT GAER AND MERMAID IN WATER (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

No, what? I'd like to hear.

The Mermaid begins to float on her back past Gaer, her breasts laced with a tangle of long damp hair that shines with moonlight to below her navel. There the pale flesh begins to gleam like mother of pearl and darken into the glistening pulsating tail whose little thrusts move it just above and below the suggestively eddying water. Gaer grips the gunwale more tightly.

GAER

Oh God, oh God -

Gaer tries to clear his head, fight panic.

GAER

(desperate)

- I, I haven't smoked in so long,  
I guess I'm not used to it - look,  
it's been a long day, I need to -  
(trying not to look at her  
pulsating tail)  
- relax a little, all right?..all  
right?

He looks longingly at the silver-runged ladder a few feet from his head.

MERMAID

(a moment)

- personally, I find the water very  
relaxing. But go right on up -  
(Gaer starts up ladder)  
- you look like you could use the  
rest -

The suggestion stops Gaer halfway up the ladder.

GAER

I said relax -

MERMAID

- what?

GAER

(near the top of the ladder,  
louder)

- what I said was I needed to relax-

GAER AND MERMAID ON BOAT AND IN WATER (NIGHT) CONTD

OTHER FEMALE VOICE

- not so loud, okay?..

Gaer looks around, panicked.

ON THE STERN OF THE CRUISER IS CANDY

in a little halter-top nightie.

CANDY

(loud whisper\_

- you'll wake up Lenny.

She points below.

REV ANGLE WITH GAER

standing on ladder, looking across the deck toward Candy,  
nervously glancing to the water out of SHOT below him.

GAER

- sorry.

CANDY

- so who's there?

GAER

- who's where?

CANDY

- in the water with you -

GAER

(glancing down)

- nobody, absolutely nobody - just -  
checking the bottom ~~something~~ - you  
know - when I get frustrated I tend to  
- talk to myself...

CANDY

(very interested)

..frustrated?..like how?

GAER

(hapless)

Oh God, Candy some days, you know what  
it's like -

CANDY

Oh I know. Can I help? Come over and  
talk?



EXT GAER'S YACHT & MARINA GAER AND CANDY (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

(glancing down to water)  
- how about Lenny?

CANDY

(nicely)  
Fuck him. I mean he's...fine.

Lenny pokes a grey and disheveled head out of the cabin.

LENNY

I'm not gonna be fine if you keep  
talking all night, Candy.

Candy gives a chagrined shrug of apology to everyone and  
disappears.

GAER

drops back down below his deck to avoid Lenny, glances down  
from the ladder to see the Mermaid is no longer there.  
He's surprised. He takes a step or two down the ladder,  
til he's in the water, and peers around. No Mermaid. He  
swims a tentative stroke or two.

THE MERMAID

surfaces behind Gaer, who nearly gasps at the sound.

MERMAID

- I thought you were too tired -

GAER

I never said that -

MERMAID

(moving away from boat)  
- please, don't pretend, not with me -

GAER

- I'm not pretending -

MERMAID

(with a little flip of her  
tail)  
- and certainly not at your age...  
(circling back toward him)  
- not that you seem old.

EXT GAER'S YACHT GAER AND MERMAID IN WATER (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

(more than a little annoyed)

Now look, it's late and I'm in no mood to screw around, are you what I think you are?

(she looks at him)

- forget it. Don't answer that - just let me look at your tail. Would you mind? Just let me look at it.

She languorously begins to float on the surface, moving her tail around Gaer.

THE MERMAID'S TAIL GAER'S POV

in all its translucent pulsating splendor, slithers slowly thru the water less than a foot from Gaer's eyes.

MERMAID'S VOICE

- touch it if you'd like...

Gaer's hand, shakily touches the tail as it slides THRU FRAME - pointedly, almost demurely avoiding the opalescent crotch.

MERMAID'S VOICE

- you can't hurt it -

THE MERMAID

drops her tail beneath the surface. To an astonished Gaer:

MERMAID

..there's nothing there..

MERMAID

Want to head back now? or swim with me?

GAER

Where to?

MERMAID

Just swim - doesn't have to be somewhere, does it?

GAER

- no.

EXT GAER'S YACHT GAER AND MERMAID IN WATER (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

I can show you things about the water  
anywhere.

GAER

(progressively mesmerized)

- like what?

MERMAID

- oh, how to make the water move..  
that's the real trick if you want to  
move thru water, and you do, don't  
you?

GAER

- yeah. I do.

The Mermaid moves close to him, circling him, putting her  
hands on him, slowly encircling him with her arms and her  
tail:

MERMAID

- face it. The water's a woman. Give  
her a chance, let her move, let  
her help. I think you'll be  
surprised...ready?..

They're nearly nose to nose now. Gaer is completely  
mesmerized. He nods slowly. Her arms are now wrapped  
tightly around him - she thrusts her head sharply back,  
then begins to MOVE along the surface of the water with  
Gaer in her arms, SKIMMING it with growing speed. Just as  
she seems about to escalate into some peak velocity, she  
PLUNGES beneath the surface with Gaer.

CAMERA MOVES swiftly across the water, inches above it,  
staring down at the gleam of their intertwined bodies,  
hurtling just a couple of feet below the surface. They  
seem to be moving closer to the surface as they swim and  
suddenly the water BURSTS open in a white boil.

THE MERMAID AND A DOLPHIN

that seems to leap from her arms sail thru the air in  
tandem, animals of the same species. They plunge beneath  
the sea at the same moment as well.

EXT BALBOA BAY GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

UNDERWATER MOVING POV

past buoys, the hulls of boats side by side in their slips, with flashes of underwater light coming from stern or bow lights and the occasional porthole near the waterline. An ecstatic cry can be heard as CAMERA BREAKS THE SURFACE and leaps thru the air again, plunging back into the sea and speeding past flashes of underwater light that burst like explosions, illuminating the Mermaid that can be glimpsed at CAMERA'S side, as well as occasional undersea life that darts out of CAMERA'S way. The water darkens as the pace quickens. Then as CAMERA SLOWS, the water lightens to a kind of blue-green murkiness.

After a moment a shadow forms and appears to pulsate like a huge orchid. Its swaying is rhythmic, increasing in tempo until it becomes a steady ripple which itself intensifies to a kind of volatile trembling so violent it seems as tho it will tear itself to shreds - and as it does:

THE MERMAID AND THE DOLPHIN

spin free of the huge kelp bed and into clear blue green water as tho they'd burst out of the depths of a dark flower. They CLIMB with growing power and speed toward the moonlit surface, leaving shreds of spinning kelp in their wake.

THE WATER'S SURFACE

comes closer and closer to CAMERA.

THE MERMAID AND THE DOLPHIN (UNDERWATER)

break thru the surface and out of SHOT.

GAER AND THE MERMAID

land on Roca Botar, ending their leap by sliding across a bed of foam and granite, a surging wave smoothing their landing.

Gaer collapses on the foamy granite, shaking. The Mermaid appears a little surprised. She touches his shoulder. Gaer jerks away, his face buried in kelp that's strewn across the granite.

GAER

- no, don't!

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

Don't what?

GAER

(face buried)

- do that again, turn me into that...

He lies there shaking. A gentle swell rolls across the granite bed, lifting them both slightly. Gaer has to rise, head dripping.

MERMAID

- sorry. Didn't mean to frighten you.

GAER

Then why did you do it? What the hell did you expect?

MERMAID

Actually I didn't turn you into a dolphin. I just took you back to a time when you were a dolphin - thought you might like it.

Gaer looks down at his body. Then, to her:

GAER

- how did I know I wasn't going to be like that forever?...you should've warned me.

MERMAID

I'm really sorry...

GAER

- okay, okay..actually..it..wasn't ..all that bad...

MERMAID

No?

GAER

No...

(he touches, strokes his own skin in recall)

..in fact it was amazing..

(gravely)

..my skin felt the water.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

He says this last as tho it's a great revelation.

MERMAID

Skin does that.

GAER

(suddenly impatient)

- no! it felt the water,  
touched the water, it could really  
touch it like my skin was all fingers  
and the water...was..

Gaer trails off as he's lost in the recall.

MERMAID

(watching him intently)

- was what?

GAER

(looks directly at Mermaid)

- someone else's body.

MERMAID

(pleased at the description)

What kind of body?

GAER

(caught up with it now,  
excited)

- Oh God, all I know is touching it  
made me move faster and faster and I  
never want to stop touching it -

Almost choking with desire, he looks to the Mermaid. The Mermaid - if not intimidated, is carefully matter of fact nevertheless.

MERMAID

- so it felt good.

GAER

- no. It's..more than a feeling, it's  
my whole life. I forgot - I'm lost  
without the sea, I'm lost...now what?

MERMAID

- now you can imagine the boat  
you've always wanted -

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

- I can?

MERMAID

(leaning into him, softly)

- you have...just now. In the water. A boat that sails like you swam - but can you give me what I want?

GAER

What's that?

There's an o.s. whirring sound. In moments the red and rude bug light of a shore patrol helicopter clears a bluff, heading on a seaward sweep. Gaer turns back to the Mermaid.

MERMAID

(gesturing)

This.

GAER

'- this?'

MERMAID

(raising voice over approaching helicopter)

This rock. Protect it.

GAER

(not sure he's heard right, raising his voice)

Well, sure, but...that's it? a rock?

MERMAID

(glancing skyward)

It's where I live. Promise?

The helicopter is overhead now, the noisy teeth rattling, its searchlight spreading across the water, moving directly toward the rock.

GAER

(hesitates, then:)

I promise.

The searchlight SPLATTERS across Roca Botar, the sound is deafening. The Mermaid grabs Gaer and they tumble into the kelp bed.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER UNDERWATER

twists and turns in a phantasmagoria of kelp and flashing Mermaid tail and as he's more and more entangled in the undersea thicket, the searchlight and the helicopter sound seem to grow even brighter and louder and Gaer grows more frantic, groping for the Mermaid's outstretched hand, then finds:

HIS HAND ON THE BULKHEAD

over his bed in the stateroom of his boat. Gaer looks to see:

MARTINI STANDING IN THE OPEN STATEROOM DOOR

light streaming onto Gaer from behind him. Martini seems fresh and attentive and apologetic:

MARTINI

Sorry to pound away like that chief, but the harbor commissioner's over at the construction site -

GAER

- the harbor commissioner? Those D-9's making too much noise again?

MARTINI

No.

GAER

Well, what's the harbor commissioner want?

MARTINI

To see you - I don't know.

GAER

Okay, let me get dressed. By the way, that wasn't funny, Martini.



INT GAER'S YACHT STATEROOM GAER AND MARTINI CONTD

Martini has begun to head to the galley while Gaer is throwing on pants and moving to the head.

MARTINI

It wasn't?

GAER

(turning on water, brushing  
teeth)

No, it wasn't.

MARTINI'S VOICE

(from galley\_

What wasn't funny?

GAER

(water and toothpaste gushing  
in his mouth)

Oh, come on, let's not pretend about  
something like that - whatever you put  
in those joints, it was terribly  
irresponsible -

MARTINI

(poking head in from galley)

Kenny, I don't know what you're  
talking about.

Gaer finishes up with a vigorous mouth rinsing:

GAER

(thru it)

- ah! no excuses, no apologies -  
(turning off water)

The harbor commissioner didn't say  
anything else?

Gaer finishes dressing and grabs some blueprints on the  
stateroom table to stuff into a briefcase.

MARTINI

No, but he had the variance with him -  
Kenny -

GAER

What variance?

MARTINI

- for the extra three hundred slips.  
We got 'em this morning.

INT GAER'S YACHT STATEROOM GAER AND MARTINI CONTD

GAER

(really surprised, moving  
to galley)

- and you didn't think I'd be  
interested in hearing about this?

Gaer has moved into the galley.

MARTINI

Of course I did - but Kenny I didn't  
put anything in those joints -

GAER

Martini, forget it. I'm not  
discussing that now - let me just say  
when you start hallucinating and don't  
know why you're hallucinating it's  
very dangerous. I could've really  
hurt myself... So Distal came thru -

Gaer whips open the refrigerator with Martini staring  
blankly at him.

MARTINI

You were hallucinating?

GAER

(of course)

Yes.

MARTINI

What about?

GAER

Never mind.

(downs juice, then, with a  
slight smile:)

- but Martini - I will say this - it  
was great shit. Let's go...what're  
you looking at?

Martini's back is to Gaer as he is looking at something on  
the galley table.

MARTINI

Nothing - just that you pulled that  
model out of the water.

GAER

What model?

INT GAER'S YACHT GALLEY GAER AND MARTINI CONTD

MARTINI

- the one you threw in the water last night.

Martini moves away and now Gaer can see the model for the black-hulled yawl lying on the galley table amidst airplane model type tools, and a mound of shavings in the ashtray.

GAER

moves slowly to the galley table.

GAER'S HANDS

reach down and pick up the model. It can be seen that the black keel has been unevenly shaved - there are ripples of black and white stripes scored thru the keel.

MARTINI'S VOICE

- you worked on it too, huh?

GAER

fingers the black shavings in the ashtray, catches a Martini whose interest is turning to concern.

GAER

- yeah. Guess I did...

Gaer's lost in the scored hull and shavings when the galley phone rings sharply. Martini moves to answer it.

GAER

Don't bother - it's probably from the site - let's just..get outta here -

Gaer replaces the model of the black yawl on the galley table and leaves it. CAMERA, however, holds on the yawl and its crinkled sails while the phone continues to ring insistently.

EXT WEBSTER VERANDA (OUTSIDE DOROTHY'S BEDROOM) DOROTHY

on the phone, listens to the unanswered rings as she stares across the rolling lawns of her estate, to the cove below, the sea beyond - and in it, a little sunlit chip of stone - Roca Botar.

EXT WEBSTER VERANDA (OUTSIDE DOROTHY'S BEDROOM) CONTD

Fay rides by with the gardener on a power mower - under a parasol - waves wildly to Dorothy, who waves back.

DR. MCWILLIAMS AND DR. SCHEER

sit solemnly on an outdoor chaise lounge - coffee on the glass topped table before them. McWilliams is old, Scheer very young - and obviously the stranger to the setting.

Dorothy finally replaces the phone.

MCWILLIAMS

- no answer?

DOROTHY

He's probably gone to the construction site -

She nods in the direction of a cove up the coast - from the general direction of which a faint humming sound can be heard, like a distant swarm of bees.

MCWILLIAMS

Can't you call there?

DOROTHY

I'm not sure Joan'll be with him, and I'm not sure Ken'll know where she is and - I'm not even sure..I'd know.. what to say to her - ..how do you tell somebody you're dying when you don't feel like it?

MCWILLIAMS

Dorothy, you don't have to talk to Joan and Nancy about this, either myself or Dr. Scheer -

DOROTHY

Don't be silly John. I just mean it's too nice a day, and too nice a breeze for me to feel like I'm dying. So I guess I'm not in the mood to talk about it. Don't worry, John - eventually I'll think of something to tell them. Is there a problem with that, Dr. Scheer?

Scheer rises, shakes his head.

EXT WEBSTER VERANDA DOROTHY AND DOCTORS CONTD

SCHEER

No, I just wanted to be sure I've made it clear that from this point on your condition can progress rapidly - so your family...I'm sorry..

DOROTHY

(nods, then:)

I'll let them know.   
 Thank you, John.

DOROTHY

turns her head and gazes up the coast, a light breeze ruffling her hair, as she listens to the low humming sound in the distance.

A GIANT D-9 FILLS THE SCREEN

belching smoke and dust and roaring with a ferocious decibel level. It clears the screen on its angry way revealing:

A CONSTRUCTION SITE BILLBOARD SIGN WITH A WDC SUNBURST

and logo announcing: "MARINA DEL SOL - preliminary site for another coastal community from WEBSTER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION - planning California's future."

ANOTHER GIANT YELLOW D-9 bursts into FRAME and FILLS SCREEN. When it clears, Gaer in shirt and tie and yellow helmet to match the D-9's stands high on the sheared palisade behind the sign. He lowers a pair of binoculars and turns to the three men beside him - the Harbor Commissioner, Cliff Alverson, Harbor Fire Chief Budde, and his construction supervisor FRANK BROERSMA. Gaer is fairly hopping up and down with agitation - but the roaring D-9's, leveling earth, flattening the cove, and whipping up and down the beach like angry insects - make it impossible to hear even the sound of their voices.

Gaer stops his gesticulations, points to the several barges full of earth and stone that lie just offshore, ready to move off with their load of earth and vegetation.

He removes his hat, shakes his head and starts up the steep incline of rocky rubble to a STAND OF CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILERS in a barren and levelled spot atop the palisade - the other men stand there momentarily at a loss. They look at one another, shrug - follow Gaer to the trailers.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE GAER AND MEN CONTD

CAMERA SHIFTS SLIGHTLY TO SEE:

A WEBSTER DEVELOPMENT HELICOPTER

hovering above the construction site, setting down on a levelled spot atop the palisade about thirty yards from the trailers.

WITH THE ROTORS WHIPPING UP DUST JOAN

alights, impeccably dressed in a business suit and accompanied by KERMIT BELL, a man in a dark blazer who parts his hair.

On either side of the construction site - lush untouched coves can be seen from this vantage - making the site seem like the slag pit. Joan holds onto her sunglasses and leads Bell under the rotor blades toward the lead construction trailer.

As they walk, the specter of Roca Botar can be seen still shimmering in forenoon light - much closer to the shore from this site than from the Webster Cove.

Joan is chatting to Bell about the site as they walk, but Bell shakes his head, indicating the din of the D-9's below - points to the trailer, meaning 'wait til we get inside.' Joan nods and opens the trailer door to:

A GAGGLE OF CONSTRUCTION CREW AND GAER, HARBOR COMMISSIONER (CLIFF ALVERSON), BROERSMA, MARTINI

all appeari

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A GAGGLE OF CONSTRUCTION CREW AND GAER, HARBOR COMMISSIONER (CLIFF ALVERSON), BROERSMA, MARTINI

all appearing to talk at once - moving from elevations on a large cork board to aerial photos of the site, including some of Roca Botar.

GAER

(to Harbor Commissioner)

What the hell are you talking about, Cliff?

ALVERSON (Harbor Commissioner)

A double danger angle.

Alverson points to an aerial photo of Roca Botar and the two means of egress to the cove - on either side of it.

INT CONSTRUCTION TRAILER GAER ALVERSON AND CREW CONTD

GAER

I never set more than a danger angle myself -

ALVERSON

Not everybody can sail the way you do, Kenny -

JOAN WITH KERMIT

is astonished at the contentiousness.

JOAN

Honey, I'd like you to meet someone -

GAER

Hi, in a minute, honey - you're being real fussy, Frank.

JOAN

- Kermit Bell of Cal Fed, he has some good news -

GAER

Hi, I know Kermit - honey - excuse us?

ALVERSON

- enough of this crap, Kenny. You know damn well the shoals here and here -

(pointing to areas around rock)

- are so bad that if you haven't sailed past it a thousand times you have to make a double set just to make harbor. With three hundred more slips in this cove, three hundred more boats going in and out - I want this rock - gone. Out. An air traffic controller couldn't prevent accidents otherwise.

JOAN

So what's the point?

GAER

Honey, please - I'm trying to figure it out myself -



INT CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILER GAER ALVERSON BUDDE BROERSMA  
JOAN BELL ET AL CONTD

JOAN

I think I'm entitled to know - Mr.  
Alverson?

Alverson glances at Gaer.

ALVERSON

Well, Mrs. Gaer, your proposed marina  
has been granted a variance from 1200  
slips to 1500.

JOAN

Yes, I'm aware of that.

ALVERSON

Well that's too many boats going in  
and out of the harbor - unless you get  
rid of that big rock out there.

JOAN

Well how do we do that?

Fire Chief Budde, a young surfer type with a beard and  
light in his eye:

BUDDE

Dynamite, ma'am. Oh, sixty, seventy,  
eighty percent gelignite and it's  
history, it's real -

GAER

Brad, cool it. Would you give us a  
minute, honey?

JOAN

So what's the problem?

GAER

Honey, would you?

JOAN

I'd like to know what the problem is -  
Mr. Bell here is going to provide the  
additional interim financing -

GAER

I - I - okay -

INT CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILER GAER JOAN CREW ET AL CONTD

He takes Joan by the arm and literally propels her thru a door to a tiny bedroom in the trailer with a cot-like bed and rumpled sheets on it. Joan notices the bed.

GAER

I have a problem blowing up that rock.

JOAN

You mean Mother's not going to like it?

GAER

No, that's not my problem. I have a geology report that says an explosion on the shelf could create a serious sediment shift - which is why I worked the marina around that rock to begin with, not because of your mother's feelings about it.

JOAN

- well now what?

GAER

Now we'll have to resubmit the plan to Distal with the requirement and - cross our fingers. Honey, I've got to get back -

JOAN

(stopping him)

'Cross our fingers?' sure you'd be willing to go that far?

GAER

(pleasantly)

Well, honey if you want to do something really useful - when the coastal commission sees the geology report from Caltech you can bend over, kiss your ass and those three hundred slips goodbye.

Gaer smiles. Joan stares at him - tries not to laugh.  
Then:

JOAN

Honey - I'd much rather kiss yours.

INT CONSTRUCTION TRAILER BEDROOM GAER AND JOAN CONTD

GAER

Honey - you don't mean that.

Joan wraps her arms around Gaer's waist, drops to her knees, and manages to give his ass a bite.

GAER

(laughs)

- hey, cut it out!

He grabs her, lifts her up and they kiss.

JOAN

(pointedly)

How was last night?

GAER

(momentary paranoia)

- how was what last night?

JOAN

(leaning into him, kissing him)

-the boat without me...lonely?

GAER

(carefully)

- no honey, not with the mermaid that came by..

JOAN

You son of a bitch! Be serious. We can lose the slips over this geology report.

Gaer has inched her down onto the cot-like bed - its springs squeak.

~~GAER~~

~~(gradually lowering her to bed)~~

~~Then honey - do something about it.~~

~~(almost completely on top of her)~~

~~- get him out of here so he won't hear what's going on. But first -~~

INT CONSTRUCTION TRAILER BEDROOM GAER AND JOAN CONTD

GAER

wraps his arms around her and sinks into her, giving her a full-bore pre-coital kiss. She responds, but winces at the springs squeaking on the cot -

JOAN

(a desperate whisper)

- honey, they're right outside -

GAER

(right back)

- just as long as they don't come in here -

He kisses her again. She pulls away.

JOAN

- honey I can't do this now - that is our financing on the hoof out there -

She deftly slides out from under him, leaving him ruffled on the cot. She gives her skirt an expert twitch to center it and one quick hand down her stomach to smooth it.

JOAN

- see you tonight - unless of course you've got other fish to fry.

She strides out the door, leaving Gaer alone on the bed staring contemplatively after her. He hears her calling, 'cmon, Kermit, it's no problem, let's go grab a bite.'

Gaer waits another moment, then rises and ambles out to the harbor commissioner, fire chief, et al - Broersma has answered the phone.

BROERSMA

No, Mrs. Webster, she just...

(peeks out to see  
helicopter airborne)

- left..yes ma'am, I'll do that.  
(hangs up)

Dorothy Webster wants to see you and Joan.

GAER

- when?

BROERSMA

- soon as you can.

EXT WEBSTER SWIMMING POOL GAER FAY

CLOSE GAER

lying back, sweaty, brow stitched in a frown, eyes at half mast, quietly tense. There's the sound of o.s. splashing and Gaer's eyes widen a touch. The splashing drifts into echoes of sounds he'd heard with the mermaid and his eyes open a little more, gaze reflectively. Suddenly a pin-point water spray breaks into FRAME, smacks him in the temple.

Gaer looks in near panic in the direction of the spray.

GAER

How'd you do that? how did you do that?

BY THE COPING OF THE WEBSTER SWIMMING POOL FAY

hangs on with one hand, mischievously laughs, and shakes her head, indicating she won't tell.

DOROTHY'S VOICE

- c'mon water baby, you're turning into a prune -

Dorothy strides into SHOT, and hefts Fay out of the water, revealing a bright green plastic water gun that she inadvertently squirts again. Dorothy wraps Fay in a huge pink beach towel.

GAER

appears somewhat relieved at the sight of the water pistol.

BY POOLSIDE GAER IN A DECKCHAIR FAY DOROTHY NAOMI

Dorothy turns to Naomi and takes a tray from her that has iced tea and a sandwich on it.

DOROTHY

(to Naomi)

- see if you can get this one dressed before her mother comes -

FAY

(to Naomi)

Pick me up like a little baby, okay?

BY POOLSIDE GAER FAY DOROTHY NAOMI CONTD

Naomi promptly grabs the toweled bundle and carries it giggling down the pool thru the bouganvilla breezeway.

GAER

(sitting up, taking a bite  
from a sandwich)

- thanks, honey. Reach Joan?

DOROTHY

(shaking her head)

- not home yet. Any idea where she's  
having lunch?

GAER

- wherever she'd take Kermit Bell -  
~~what's up? you hear about the harbor~~  
~~commissioner?~~

DOROTHY

~~Oh yeah.~~

~~GAER~~

(indicating Roca Botar)

Listen, it's your rock, honey - if you  
don't want to blow it up, don't.  
We'll figure out some other way -

DOROTHY

(a little acidly)

- will you now?

GAER

- if that's what you want.

DOROTHY

- I'm surprised -

GAER

At what?

DOROTHY

- your statement. It lacks both  
conviction and practicality, and that  
is not very characteristic.

Gaer looks warily at Dorothy who seems to be trembling a  
little.

EXT WEBSTER POOLSIDE GAER AND DOROTHY CONTD

GAER

(abruptly)

Okay, what's up?

DOROTHY

- Let's wait for Joan and Nancy and -  
Maynard.

GAER

Okay...

He takes another bite. Dorothy watches him a moment.

Gaer doesn't look up from his sandwich. Takes a sip of  
iced tea.

GAER

I love the way Naomi puts just a  
little mint in this -

DOROTHY

It wasn't Naomi, it was me. What'd  
you two fight about last night?

GAER

(shrugs)

Same thing -

(then quickly)

- nothing, it's just..she's just..I'm  
just - there's no walkin' and talkin'  
in the hallways with Joan these days -  
it's strictly business, that's all...

DOROTHY

So you caroused about on the boat?

GAER

'Caroused about?' What's that mean?

DOROTHY

You're asking me?

Gaer shrugs, then slowly smiles.

DOROTHY

(watching him)

- must've been some night.

EXT WEBSTER POOLSIDE DOROTHY AND GAER CONTD

GAER

(turning to her)

Why would you say that, Dorothy?

DOROTHY

(right back, amused)

- the dreamy look on your face, Kenny.  
Was it Candy? or that other cutie on  
Lenny's boat -

GAER

- Norma.

(smiling, amused himself)

- Dorothy, I'm shocked. You're my  
mother-in-law.

DOROTHY

(wickedly intime)

So what?

GAER

- actually I was thinking about a  
dream I had where somebody asked me to  
protect Roca Botar.

DOROTHY

(gives him a fishy look)

- you had this dream last night?

GAER

(nods)

- yeah.

DOROTHY

- and then woke up and heard from  
the harbor commissioner?

GAER

That's right.

Dorothy nods.

DOROTHY

So who was it?...in the dream who asked  
you about the rock?

Gaer is a little flustered.



EXT WEBSTER POOLSIDE DOROTHY AND GAER CONTD

GAER

- oh, nobody I know in real life -

DOROTHY

Man or woman?

GAER

(a bite, casually)  
A girl, sort of -

DOROTHY

(amused at his evasiveness)  
' - sort of?'

GAER

(then, breezily)  
- okay - I dreamt a mermaid told me  
she lived out there and asked me to  
protect it because..it's where she  
lived.

Gaer smiles with a kind of haggard insouciance.

Dorothy doesn't appear to register much surprise.

DOROTHY

A mermaid.

GAER

That's right.

DOROTHY

Why're you so nervous about that - or  
is it embarrassed -

GAER

It was just kinda - vivid, I don't  
know -

(abruptly)

- why does the rock mean so much to  
you?

This stops Dorothy's amusement. Slowly:

EXT WEBSTER POOL DOROTHY AND GAER CONTD

DOROTHY

- because it's been there so long, I guess -

(she looks toward open sea and Roca Botar)

- every June when I got back from boarding school, I'd grab a big old yellow paddleboard, race out there, climb the rock, stretch out and feel the sun and salt air and spray and then - I was really..home. Like your mermaid. You said it's where she lived, didn't you?

GAER

(momentarily mesmerized)

- what? oh yeah -

DOROTHY

- anyway...I wanted you all here to let you know I'm stepping down as Chairman of Webster Development today -

GAER

(shocked)

Because of this?

Dorothy, hearing a car honk, and round a curve below.

DOROTHY

(starts to cough)

- hell no. Maybe it is. Maybe it reminds me I'm out of step - anyway, I think that's your new chairman - don't worry. When it comes to development you two see things pretty much the same - excuse me a sec -

Dorothy's coughing spasm seems to grow progressively worse as she hurries into the house.

The car pulls up the long crescent driveway, kicking up pebbles. In a moment Joan walks thru the breezeway and down the pool coping toward Gaer, still impeccable in the afternoon heat.

Another car can be heard pulling up in the gravel driveway.

EXT WEBSTER POOL GAER JOAN CONTD

GAER

(rising from deck chair)

- how was lunch?

JOAN

(kissing Gaer)

- fine honey - what's up with Mother?  
Anything important?

GAER

(teasing a little)

Sort of.

HUGGINS VOICE

Kenny you gotta see this -

Huggins in b.g. hurries down the pool coping with two  
sailing models under arm.

JOAN

(teasing back, getting  
physical again)

Well can you sort of tell me?

HUGGINS

- you gotta. Kenny?

It can now be seen that one of the matched pair is the  
black hulled yawl that Gaer had thrown out his galley  
porthole and found with its keel shaved and scored back on  
the galley table in the morning.

GAER

(to Joan)

I'm not sure -

(breaks off when he sees the  
model, to Huggins:)

- Oh no. Where'd you get that?

Ned, I'm really sorry -

JOAN

She tell you not to?

GAER

Not to what?

HUGGINS

Never mind - just look at it -

(dumps model in the pool)

EXT WEBSTER POOL GAER JOAN HUGGINS CONTD

GAER

(glancing to Ned)

- in just a -

JOAN

- Hey! evade one of us at a time,  
will you?

There's a slight edge in Joan's voice.

GAER

Is that what I'm doing?

JOAN

Isn't it?

HUGGINS

(operating models in pool  
electronically, b.g.)

Come on you guys, take a look. This  
is something.

GAER

- noo, honey, I just thought your  
mother would -

(breaks off under her stare)

- she mentioned she's stepping down as  
Chairman of Webster Development, and -  
you're taking over - congratulations,  
Chief.

Joan stares blankly at Gaer almost as tho she hadn't heard  
him.

JOAN

- she inside?

Gaer nods tentatively. Joan turns on her heel and heads  
into the house. Gaer, puzzled and vaguely disturbed,  
watches her go.

HUGGINS

Kenny, look at this -

GAER

(staring after Joan)

I know, I know I messed up one of the  
models, Ned, I'll tell you all about  
it in a minute -

Gaer follows Joan into the house.

INT WEBSTER HOME GAER MOVES DOWN THE HALL

toward the sound of rising voices - Joan's and Dorothy's. Joan swears and Gaer winces at the sound. He turns a corner and enters:

INT DOROTHY'S STUDY (WEBSTER HOME) JOAN AND DOROTHY

stand over a papier mache model of the proposed marina - complete with papier mache mock-up of Roca Botar. Joan is spitting cigarette smoke.

JOAN

- strange way to find out, that's all, Mother.

Dorothy glances up at Gaer.

DOROTHY

- I mentioned it while we were waiting for you, that's all...

The smoke from Joan's cigarette provokes another coughing spasm from Dorothy. Joan doesn't really notice it, but Gaer does.

GAER

Joan, why don't you put that out?  
It's -

JOAN

Why don't you let me talk to my mother? Never mind. I've got a four o'clock plane -

GAER

- why?

JOAN

- I'm seeing Distal in Sacramento tomorrow morning - he's been told we have to detonate Roca Botar, and I'm going to make sure he goes along with it -

INT DOROTHY'S STUDY (WEBSTER HOME) GAER JOAN DOROTHY CONTD

GAER

Joan, I've told you not to see Senator Distal. You're simply not effective with him.

JOAN

- I know. He doesn't like being hustled. We'll see if I can get him to like it.

She leaves.

Gaer and Dorothy stand in the wake of silence left by Joan's departure. Dorothy's breathing heavily, sinks down to her desk, perspiring.

DOROTHY

- Joan felt slighted - you heard before she did.

GAER

- about your resigning?

Dorothy nods, Gaer shakes his head.

DOROTHY

Well, she's always been a little insecure that way - my husband and I were very close and, oh what the hell's the difference!..

She breaks off and there are tears in her eyes. The sudden outburst moves Gaer to her side.

GAER

(shocked)

- Dorothy, what's wrong?

INT DOROTHY'S STUDY (WEBSTER HOME) GAER AND DOROTHY CONTD

DOROTHY

Nothing, nothing, honey believe me...you just - have no idea how guilty kids make you feel no matter how old you get or they get - so. Come on. Tell me something.

GAER

- anything.

Dorothy glances down at the papier mache model.

DOROTHY

- she must have offered you something -

(in response to Gaer's blank stare she taps the papier mache mock-up of Roca Botar)

- mermaids don't ask without offering-

GAER

- you know many mermaids, Dorothy?  
(in response to Huggins' calls)

I've got to see what he wants -

DOROTHY

(moving with Gaer)

- not personally, but I know about one -

GAER

Well mine did promise to show me how to sail faster -

Gaer steps outside with Dorothy to the pool again. As he does, a pair of binoculars are THRUST into his face.

HUGGINS

- okay, now look. Look.

Huggins practically holds the binoculars up to Gaer's eyes and forces him to direct them to the two models of the black-hulled yachts sailing around in the swimming pool - Huggins controlling their little shifts and tacs with electronic nine-volt pocket units. Gaer reluctantly holds the binoculars to his eyes. Dorothy watches with mild interest.

EXT WEBSTER POOLSIDE GAER DOROTHY HUGGINS CONTD  
THRU BINOCULARS AT BLACK-HULLED YACHT  
as it tacks thru pool water toward CAMERA.

HUGGINS VOICE

- look how deep the eddy is on the  
starboard tack -

The binoculars move to the tiny wake at its stern.

HUGGINS' VOICE

- now look at the model where you  
shaved the keel -

THRU BINOCULARS AS THEY MOVE

from the tiny wake to the model Gaer had found with its  
scored keel - the scoring actually visible because of the  
sharp angle the model heels at. As it moves, Gaer focuses  
the binoculars on its wake - the tiny swirls and eddies at  
the stern are almost non-existent.

GAER LOWERS THE BINOCULARS

in shock. Dorothy looks with growing interest.

GAER

- look I'm not quite sure what I'm  
doing yet..

HUGGINS

- well, keep doing it.

Huggins moves back to the coping and begins to disassemble  
both models to transport them.

Dorothy watches Gaer as he stares into space.

DOROTHY

(quietly)

Where did you get the idea?

Gaer shrugs sheepishly.



EXT POOLSIDE WEBSTER ESTATE GAER DOROTHY E HUGGINS CONTD

GAER

Dorothy, it was a dream.

DOROTHY

Watch it kiddo - mermaids have a reputation for luring sailors to a watery death if they don't keep their word - even if they do - and there's been mention of a mermaid on Roca Botar for two hundred years or more -

Dorothy starts to turn away.

GAER

- you're kidding.

DOROTHY

Oh come on, Kenny - you had to have heard about her. Naomi has been talking to me about her since I was a kid, she's even painted on the old jetty house wall - don't worry now. She hasn't ~~hurt~~ hurt anybody yet. Nobody who's talking - don't be so serious

GAER

I'm not - I mean -

DOROTHY

You can't do a thing for her anyway, regardless of what she says - mermaids are immortal. They live forever, rock or no rock.

GAer suddenly smiles.

GAER

Yeah? Well maybe she hasn't heard her own legend -

DOROTHY

Then remind her there's something else you can do to save her - if a human being loves a mermaid and is willing to die for her she becomes a human being - she may not live forever anymore but what the hell, it's better than being a dead fish -

GAER

(spotting something over Dorothy's shoulder)  
- Ned leave it!....

EXT POOLSIDE WEBSTER ESTATE GAER DOROTHY HUGGINS CONTD

Huggins had started to repack both models - looks up surprise at the sudden vehemence.

GAER

- something I want to try just...  
(picks up model off coping)  
..occurred to me...

Gaer picks up the model holding it awkwardly. Trying to be casual with both Dorothy and Huggins:

x

GAER

- just - you know, to try -

With that he attempts to saunter down the pool, but he's like a man trying casually to race to a rest room and hold it - the pace of his exit quickens until he's nearly running by the time he reaches the breezeway..

Dorothy and Huggins look from the retreating figure and exchange puzzled glances.

EXT GAER IN A SKIFF (MARINA SLIP TWILIGHT)

by the stern of his yacht braces himself and repeatedly pulls the cord on an Evinrude motor. It splutters, chokes - starts and stops.

Surrounding him is the buzz of cocktail hour from the countless slips. He tries once more with the Evinrude - without success.

GAER STRIDES ALONG THE DECK

and moves down the companionway to the galley where he grabs a pair of binoculars off the galley table and turns to leave when something by the porthole stops him.

POV GAER OF A VICTORIAN LITHOGRAPH

A whale and dolphins are at play. One of the spinner dolphins has a belly that is 'scored' with tiny lines.

GAER

looks from the lithograph to the galley table where the black yawl is lying next to a beanbag ashtray that still has the black shavings. Gaer runs his fingers along the keel which is scored in a manner strikingly similar to the dolphin belly. Gaer fingers one of the shavings - almost like a curl from a woman's head.

THRU BINOCULARS ROCA BOTAR

It appears to sway slightly in the binoculars, its amber navigating light having begun to blink in the fast falling twilight. The binoculars shift to the base of the rock and the kelp bed, scanning it.

FEMALE VOICE

What're you doing up there?

The binoculars rake across the ocean and into the sky and:

GAER HANGS ONTO THE MAST

some forty feet above his deck, looking down. Candy stands at its base, fetching in a pair of cutoffs.

GAER

- oh hi, Candy, just - you know -

CANDY

(a loud whisper)

We've got to be careful.

GAER

We do?

CANDY

Lenny's really pissed about last night.

GAER

(trying to take it seriously)

- oh...

(there's an o.s. splash and he glances toward it)

- NO.

Gaer loses his grip and nearly falls.

CANDY

(ignoring the near catastrophe)

- he doesn't like anybody talking to me.

GAER

(looking o.s.)

- I..won't do it again -

CANDY

(softly)

Don't say that...maybe later, okay?..

GAER

(lost)

..okay..

CANDY

What time?

GAER

- what time?

CANDY

Do you want to talk?

GAER'S POV DECK CANDY AND SURROUNDING WATER

By the ladder off the starboard beam - just a few yards from Candy on the deck is the unmistakable luminous flash that suggests the mermaid's tail - it moves from beam to prow to stern, then surfaces on the port side.

GAER IS MESMERIZED

by the off-screen vision

GAER

..oh..

CANDY

- eleven too late?

GAER

- hell no, just -

Gaer glances wildly off.

CANDY

- what?..it's Lenny. He's coming back.

GAER

- yeah.

Candy nods, whispers, 'see you,' and skitters over the side.

GAER

scrambles down the mast to the deck, looks around momentarily confused about where to go first - a fine stream of water from below the starboard beam arcs across the deck and hits him from behind.

Gaer turns and heads across the deck in the direction of the spray.

BY THE STARBOARD LADDER THE MERMAID LOOKS UP

to Gaer, her chin resting on the back of her hands which lie on the top rung of the ladder.

MERMAID

- she likes you, the girl who was here. What's wrong, don't you think so?..looked like it to me, but naturally I couldn't say for sure, I'm hardly an expert - aren't you going to say anything?

EXT GAER'S YACHT GAER ON DECK MERMAID BELOW CONTD

GAER  
(kneels)

Bite my hand.

MERMAID

- why?

GAER

- I don't know.

She takes his hand.

MERMAID

Want me to bite it hard?

GAER

- yeah.

The Mermaid takes Gaer's hand in her mouth, looks at him to be certain it's what he wants - he nods. She bites, gradually increasing the pressure. Gaer watches until she stops.

MERMAID

I'll break the skin.

GAER

Don't worry about that.

MERMAID

(I can't help it)

I'm sorry, it makes me nervous - now, what are you going to do about your promise?

GAER

- my promise?

MERMAID

- that you'd protect my home...

(in response to Gaer's  
blank stare)

- where I live. The formation of rock  
out there -

GAER

(gradually lying prone on the  
deck)

I know what you mean -

EXT GAER'S YACHT GAER ON DECK MERMAID BELOW CONTD

MERMAID

Then why are you looking at me like that?

GAER

Because of the way you look.

MERMAID

Of course. It's still quite a shock for you isn't it?

GAER

Who else has seen you? Besides me?

MERMAID

No one - recently. Oh from time to time, before anyone lived here there were sailors, lost, shipwrecked, dying - I'd let them see me. I think it made them feel a little better -

GAER

What do you mean 'before anyone lived here?'

MERMAID

Lower your voice - I mean before anyone lived anywhere on that land out there - oh there may have been some people but I never saw them - look, can you keep your promise?

GAER

About the rock? Oh I think so.

MERMAID

I'm not so sure.

MERMAID

- come on - I'll show you. Come on, come on -

She offers her hand. He takes it and the Mermaid hurtles herself backward - she and Gaer PLUNGE beneath the surface, but the splash makes only the most muted of sounds. CAMERA MOVES INTO THE SPLASH, until it FILLS the screen and seems to SLOW and DISSOLVE into a steamy mist, then a kind of bright aquamarine fluid thru which bits of primordial sea life can be seen to float. Somewhere in these bright green depths a dark mass begins to rise.

DARK MASS RISING THRU MIST CONTD

MERMAID'S VOICE

This was the first thing I remember -

THE MOUNTAINOUS MASS

begins to grow and crowd out the tiny bits of sea life - to the dissonant but rhythmic and contracting sounds of some kind of birth. Suddenly the mass:

BURSTS THRU THE MISTY GREEN SEA

erupting into a violent and steamy spray. When the spray subsides it seems to subside as surf, revealing the sunlit shape of a black and pristine Roca Botar.

AT ITS BASE

emerald green water continues to retreat, until the ledge - or something like it - that Gaer had swum to - is revealed and on it is the Mermaid materializing out of ocean spray, insubstantial as a rainbow.

MERMAID'S VOICE

- the very first thing -

The sea CRASHES again over Roca Botar. As it subsides:

THE KELP BED

wispy but pervasive can be seen around the rock. The first sounds of birds can be heard, the first white bird droppings on the summit seen. A WAVE crashes over the rock. As it SUBSIDES MOVE INTO:

THE KELP BED

unbelievably lush and thick, far more than in the present. The rock teems with squirming life - otter, seal, birds - boil thru the kelp and misty green and drape, lounge and roil over the rock - a Rousseau-like marine forest.

MERMAID'S VOICE

- at the time I thought they were such pests, but I miss them now -

The animals look o.s. surprised.



# A FLIGHT OF HARPOONS SPEARS ARROWS

move with syrupy speed but inexorable aim toward CAMERA. As they clear FRAME, shadowy forms of SHIPS can be seen. O.s. the terrible sounds of the animals squealing and thrashing in water and dying are heard. As the pitch of death becomes unbearable, an especially LARGE WAVE overwhelms the frame. It subsides in unusual silence.

## THE ROCK

very much as it now looks, barren of all life but a stray bird or two - and a lone otter in the kelp bed, appear.

There is a faint almost disquieting sound that becomes melody. The melody grows into 'where oh where has my little dog gone' and into the California pastel glides the nose of a yellow paddleboard - commanded by a thirteen year old girl with zinc oxide on her impish nose. A turquoise bracelet is visible on her wrist as she wraps strands of kelp around the board to secure it - kelp not quite as full of rust and gold as her hair. The image starts to fade:

GAER'S VOICE

Wait!

MERMAID'S VOICE

- what for?

GAER'S VOICE

I think I know her. Just - please let me see.

The image seems to solidify.

## THE YOUNG DOROTHY IN THE KELP BED

hums the melody just heard as she starts to hop onto the flat rock when:

## THE SEA OTTER IN THE KELP BED

turns over and grabs her leg. Dorothy tussels with him, laughing as she does - clearly this wrestling match is not new to her. She breaks his grip on her leg, only to find the otter has grabbed her arm by the wrist - she jerks away and loses her turquoise bracelet. The otter holds it in his little paw. Dorothy yelps, and lunges off her board, pouncing on the otter. The two of them thrash about in the kelp bed, above and below it, churning up water - until Dorothy raises her arm, triumphant - she has recovered her turquoise bracelet. Slipping it back on her wrist, she admonishes the little creature who does a couple of gratuitous spins in the kelp bed. Dorothy hops onto the flat plane of the rock and with one more 'let-that-be-a-lesson-to-you' in the direction of the otter, she promptly begins to climb a narrow chimney which water intermittently rushes thru and climbs in a shooting column from occasionally powerful swells.

YOUNG DOROTHY ON ROCA BOTAR CONTD

She moves like a mountaineer - a leg on either side of the chimney when at about twenty feet she looks up in surprise and fright - a huge wave is about to break. It does.

THE COLUMN OF WATER SHOOTS

like a foaming green gusher up the chimney and into Dorothy, its force certain to tear her hands and feet from their tenuous hold. As it rushes and foams into her, the shadowy image of the Mermaid in the water column can be seen, her arms reaching out to support Dorothy. As the torrential cylinder falls into mist and sun, Dorothy has held on, sparkling with water, ecstatic, radiant and full of joy and pride.

CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL BACK

Dorothy is high on the rock, wind and spray whipping thru her hair and baggy trousers and t-shirt - and the Mermaid floats like a rainbow in the water below, looking up at her unsuspecting visitor.

The image begins to fade and DARKEN, Dorothy and the Mermaid disappearing, until the chimney and rock are in the darkness of night, and GAER and the MERMAID, backs to CAMERA F.G. are looking at the abandoned chimney.

Gaer turns to the Mermaid. As he does a wave hits with more than usual force. The Mermaid grabs hold of Gaer to keep him from being swept off the ledge. Gaer is very much aware of being in the Mermaid's grip.

MERMAID

- I'm making sure you don't get -

GAER

- I know. I know...

The Mermaid slowly loosens her grip. Gaer takes her hand.

MERMAID

What are you doing?

GAER

I like the way your hands feel.

MERMAID

Aren't they cold?

GAER

A little.

GAER AND MERMAID ON ROCA BOTAR (NIGHT) CONTD

Gaer touches her hand with both his - then places the palm of her hand to his cheek. The Mermaid stares with polite interest.

GAER

- like somebody turned water into skin -  
it's nice.

He keeps her hand to his cheek and enjoys it a little too much - the Mermaid withdraws her hand as her interest ceases to be merely polite.

MERMAID

- anyway, that's my past I've shown you  
- but I can't see my future -

GAER

Usually you can see your future?

MERMAID

Just like the past, except now -

GAER

Why not? Do you know?

MERMAID

(shaking her head)  
Maybe I can't see it because I don't  
have a future anymore - maybe you're not  
going to keep your promise. Maybe you  
won't keep me from being destroyed.

GAER

Keep you?

MERMAID

If this place disappears, maybe I do.

GAER

Don't you know?

MERMAID

How can I? It's always been here - as  
long as I have - I came from this  
stone..I can't tell if it's where I live  
or what I am..

This registers on Gaer. The Mermaid seems to have more to say, but is somehow waiting on Gaer.

GAER AND MERMAID ON ROCA BOTAR (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

(ootzing her - more)

- okay -

MERMAID

..well I was wondering - do you know?

GAER

Are you out of your mind? If you think it's confusing for you, how do you think it is for me, I've lived my whole life thinking something like you wasn't possible - I've sailed past this rock a thousand times never dreaming -

MERMAID

I know.

GAER

- you know?

MERMAID

I've watched you...

(this registers with some surprise on Gaer)

- and you look like an animal..when you're sailing and you catch the wind you look like seals do when they sun themselves or the otter when he plays in the kelp bed - you're familiar to me like they are, more than any other human I've seen. I suppose it's why I've turned to you - I've never done this before.

GAER

You've looked at me that often?

MERMAID

Oh yes. Actually I helped you lose the race - where do you think the wind went anyway?...

(childishly pleased with herself, a quick intake of air)

- I sucked it right up.

Gaer's hair actually ruffles forward - he smiles ruefully

GAER

- if you like me so much, how come you made me lose?

GAER AND MERMAID ON ROCA BOTAR (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

If I wanted something from you, I had to give you something and I had to make sure you'd want it - didn't you look at the little black boat today?

GAER

- well...yes..

MERMAID

How else do you think you could work on it and change it that way?..I showed you how to move in water, didn't I?

GAER

...I wasn't..sure..

Gaer's eyes start to flutter a little.

MERMAID

What's wrong?

GAER

(laughing but means it)  
..I think..I'm going to faint -

The Mermaid catches him again. As she holds him in her arms:

MERMAID

- why would you do that?

GAER

Oh I don't know. Isn't that what all us girls do? You make me feel like that...helpless...

MERMAID

Really?

GAER

Yes.

MERMAID

Are all girls helpless?

She's massaging his back and neck as she talks. His eyes are closed.

GAER

..absolutely..if they're anything like I am..right now...

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

Come on, stay alert..

GAER

(abruptly)

Would you drown me if I didn't keep my word?

MERMAID

- drown you?...

GAER

Isn't that what mermaids usually do?

MERMAID

I don't know..I've never met another mermaid.

Gaer shakes his head.

MERMAID

You don't believe me?

GAER

Oh, I believe you. It's just that you've lived out here by yourself - well forever.

MERMAID

So?

GAER

- you're never lonely?

MERMAID

For what?

GAER

(laughs, a little hapless)

Oh, hell - conversation. I don't know - 'hey, guess what happened today honey?' ...something like that.

The Mermaid thinks about this, nods as a responsive chord strikes.

MERMAID

Oh I've thought of talking to sailors from time to time, but more often than not it's discouraging.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

Why?

MERMAID

Well, what they seem to do more than anything else at sea is die...

(leans into him, almost a whisper)

..and frankly, it seems like a dreadful thing to do. I've never wanted to hear them talk about it. What sailors have wanted from me I can't give, and in any case it certainly wouldn't have kept any of them alive

(sees his discomfort, touches his arm solicitously)

- but I do think differently about you - and about that little girl I showed you.

GAER

- she's not such a little girl anymore.

MERMAID

(surprised)

You actually know her?

GAER

(nods)

I'm pretty sure...

MERMAID

(quickly, almost worried)

Then please don't tell her about the rock. I know her. I know what she feels and it will make her very unhappy.

GAER

(taken with her unaffected concern)

- how - did you hear about the rock being blown?

MERMAID

Oh some men were out here, climbing all over the place, one of them telling people where he'd have to put explosives

GAER  
- right, right - but look it's all bullshit.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

Bullshit? A bull's a land animal.  
What's his shit have to do with this?

GAER

- nothing, nothing. That's the point.  
It's nonsense. It can't happen because  
- because it's too -

(breaks off at Mermaid's fishy  
(stare, in a rush)

- look, let me put it this way: it  
won't happen, won't happen....I  
won't let it happen, okay?...

MERMAID

...okay...

GAER

(after a moment)  
Now what?

MERMAID

I guess you better get back...

Gaer nods and makes no move to leave. His eyes drop to her navel momentarily lingering, then back to her. She's smiling almost impishly. Gaer smiles back, amused.

GAER

You know what I'm thinking.

MERMAID

Oh yes. After all, I've been around  
sailors for some time...

She offers her hand. Gaer takes it and the Mermaid HURTLES herself backward into the sea - just as a wave BREAKS across the ledge, leaving nothing but foam and the empty granite ledge as it retreats.

FADE TO:

POV FROM LADDER

of Gaer's yacht, looking across the deck past line and tackle and boom toward other marina slips and Lenny's lush power boat. Music, laughter, and lights play off the water, reverberating and echoing from and in all directions.



GAER

dripping wet looks back down into the water to the mermaid. She's holding onto the line from his Zodiac which is secured near the yacht's ladder, the Zodiac itself having drifted from the stern of the yacht to its beam.

GAER

- listen, you got a second?

MERMAID

What for?

GAER

- show you the black model, maybe you'll have more suggestions -

MERMAID

Oh you don't need me anymore - once I showed you about the water, you did the work, believe me.

GAER

I did?

MERMAID

Yes.

GAER

- I really did?

MERMAID

Certainly.

GAER

Then you've got to see it.

He starts onto the boat.

MERMAID

But if I won't improve on it, what for?

GAER

(stops, thinks for a moment)

I want you to like it, that's all. Just wait - only take a second.

Gaer climbs aboard his boat, and the mermaid watches him go, holding onto the Zodiac line, absently plucking at the knot that secures it to the yacht, as she seems to ponder what Gaer has said.

GAER

shivering slightly scuttles down the companionway and:

INTO THE GALLEY

where Candy, Lenny, Norma, and the other man seen earlier on Lenny's boat greet him, 'Hey, Kenney how about a drink?' 'where the hell you been?' 'come on and join the party,' etc. Candy is the only one who doesn't speak. She shrugs sheepishly behind Lenny.

LENNY

Jesus, Kenney, this your idea of a party?

CANDY

Lenny caught me coming back from - when you told me we were having a party here at eleven - tonight - and you said I should invite Lenny?

She says this on a wing and a prayer, to Gaer still dripping wet in cutoffs and t-shirt.

GAER

Oh yeah, right.

LENNY

So where the hell you been?

GAER

In the water - listen, do me a favor. Don't move. I got to get rid of somebody, and I'll be right back. Don't move.

(putting his hands on Lenny)

Don't move, okay?

Lenny nods, uncertainly and follows Gaer with his eyes as Gaer turns and abruptly exits. Lenny looks to Candy, his puzzlement giving away to positive alarm.

ON DECK GAER

scrambles down ladder, looks around and can't see the mermaid. He drops into the Zodiac to gain a little broader view of the area around the boat.

GAER

(glancing around, almost frantic)

- hey, hey - uhh - uhh -

There's a purling little splash off prow.

MERMAID

(grasping the gunwale, leaning on it, chirping:)

- over here!

EXT GAER'S YACHT & ZODIAC GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

Gaer staggers mid-beam on the Zodiac, nearly losing his balance and falling in the water. The mermaid catches and steadies him.

GAER

Keep your voice down. I've got company.

MERMAID

Who?

GAER

'Who?' Does it matter?

MERMAID

..I guess I just - wanted to hear you talk about something..

GAER

Why?

He sinks down to the gunwale and is eye level with the mermaid who continues to toy intermittently with the bow line, loosening it. Their voices drop nearly to a whisper, virtually nose to nose.

MERMAID

- your voice..I like it...

This completely tongue-ties Gaer. After a long awkward moment, Gaer leans on the gunwale and kisses the mermaid lightly on the corner of her mouth. She allows it, keeping her eyes wide open. Gaer draws back, waiting for a reaction.

MERMAID

(simply)

- when you're happy, it's different.

GAER

...from what?

MERMAID

From others. When they're happy, I don't mind. In fact I prefer to see humans that way. But when you're happy, I feel something - that little girl made me feel it too -

GAER

- can you describe it?

EXT GAER'S YACHT & ZODIAC GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

MERMAID

I'm not sure. It doesn't make any sense  
- I think when you're happy...  
(she pauses, surprised)  
..that's very interesting..when you're  
happy, it hurts me..

GAER

..I hurt you?

MERMAID

- only a little..it's kind of a good  
hurt - what is it?

She stops as she sees Gaer staring intently at her.

GAER

I want to kiss you again.

MERMAID

Okay. It doesn't mean much to me, I  
must tell you. I mean whenever I've  
tried it...

GAER

You've tried it before now?

MERMAID

Oh sure, several times, just to see -

GAER

Who with? Never mind I don't want to  
know - let's forget it then..

MERMAID

No. Go ahead.

GAER

Listen, if it doesn't mean anything to  
you...

She reaches up and stops him with her mouth, he pulls back  
a tad:

MERMAID

(softly)

No..try it..I'm actually..curious..

Gaer leans on the gunwales and kisses her softly. Her eyes  
slowly close, her mouth opens and the kiss deepens. As it  
does, the mermaid's eyes open and she makes a soft little  
sound, then her eyes close slowly again and she allows the  
kiss to continue. Gaer draws back. There are tears in the  
mermaid's eyes.

EXT GAER'S YACHT & ZODIAC GAER AND MERMAID (NIGHT) CONTD

GAER

Did it feel that bad?

MERMAID

(softly)

No, oh -.

(in disbelief)

- but it's too much to feel, it's too much inside me, too much everywhere -

She looks for another frightened moment, then pushes off the gunwale, hurtling backward, PLUNGING swiftly beneath the surface.

GAER

- wait, wait, wait!

He rises to his feet, shouting this last and losing his balance. Falling backward he grasps the Evinrude motor, clutching at it, grabbing the primer cord, PULLING it to its full length, and falling overboard. As he SPLASHES into the water, the engine ROARS to life, and the Zodiac SURGES toward Gaer. Gaer ducks. The ZODIAC rams Gaer's yacht rather unceremoniously.

DOWN BELOW IN THE GALLEY CANDY LENNY ET AL

react to the sound of the Evinrude and the sensation of being rammed.

IN THE WATER GAER

surfaces, and attempts to keep the Evinrude from doing any further damage to his yacht but as he reaches for the line:

THE LINE ITSELF

breaks away from the yacht as the knot which the mermaid loosened comes completely unravelled.

THE ZODIAC RUNS FREE

in a tight circle, like a boat in a tub. Gaer in the water avoids it as it swings round and nearly runs him down. It does a couple of more circles like a dog chasing its tail, Gaer makes another swipe at the line, missing it but deflecting the craft's direction so it heads on a collision course toward the beam of the yacht again.

GAER LEAPS

frantically up from the water and GRABS the line of the errant boat, clinging to it and gaining a slender hold on the gunwale with one leg.

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LENNY CANDY ET AL

make it to the deck of the yacht to spot Gaer, one leg hugging the gunwale, as the rest of him is wrapped around the prow like a starfish. The Zodiac itself is now purring alongside the yacht having cleared the slip and moving toward a buoy and the open bay beyond.

LENNY

Kenny, where the hell you going?

GAER

(after a moment, holding on)  
Nowhere - be right back!...

He clings to the prow and purrs on out of SHOT barely missing the buoy.

EXT OPEN SEA NIGHT THE SOUND OF THE EVINRUDE

can be heard at full throttle. The throttle is CUT, the engine slows to a purr.

GAER AND EVINRUDE GLIDE

softly into SHOT. Camera MOVES WITH it as Gaer guides the little craft into the kelp bed, the SHOT suddenly including ROCA BOTAR whose navigating light had been blinking and illuminating Gaer on his approach.

Gaer cuts the engine and ties up in the kelp in a manner similar to Dorothy tying up the paddleboard. He shivers, searches around below the gunwales of the Zodiac - unzips an equipment pouch and pulls out a yellow slicker of windbreaker size - like a Mighty Mac.

He gingerly steps from the boat onto Roca Botar.

GAER

turns slowly in one spot. The silence and the open sea are each vast. As he continues to turn and look:  
DISSOLVE TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF GAER

moving around the rock, looking less for the mermaid than taking in every part of her habitat, high and low - the chimney Dorothy had climbed, the low lying ledge he and the mermaid first landed on - every facet of the rock as tho he could comprehend some meaning from its stone. Overlap these dissolves to:

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER IN FOG CONTD

GAER

back to CAMERA, a Churchillian pose - in his yellow slicker and as inert as the rock. The first yellow streaks of dawn are in the distance. The fog horn of a lone craft can be heard. Gaer slowly raises his head to the sound.

CLOSE GAER IN THE DAWN

worn and haggard, but eyes calm - flecked with some vision with which he has come to terms. He turns and looks back down at the rock.

A BRIGHT YELLOW PARASOL BOBS

above scrub oak that lines a narrow and rocky beach - a jetty with an ancient adobe roundhouse pokes a rocky finger into the cove f.g., Roca Botar is visible in the sea beyond the cove - closer than we've ever seen it. The parasol bobs to a stop by the jetty.

Breaking into FRAME on the far side of the jetty is Gaer in his Zodiac, easing up to a little dock ten yards or so from the roundhouse.

WITH GAER

as he ties up and hops onto the jetty, now wearing a sportcoat, but disheveled and unshaven nevertheless.

He walks along the top of the jetty past the roundhouse to:

DOROTHY UNDER THE PARASOL

below the jetty, sitting on a golf cart, Fay naked and brown as a nut scuttling on the beach collecting shells a few yards away, with periodic outbursts of glee, 'look at this one, Nana!' etc.

GAER'S VOICE

Hi, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

(surprised)

Ahhoh my God, Kenny...don't sneak up on somebody like that.

She takes in his appearance. Then:

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EXT WEBSTER COVE & JETTY ROUNDHOUSE DOROTHY FAY GAER CONTD

DOROTHY

You look younger than usual - and more wasted than usual. Oh, to be young enough to look wrecked..has something gone all that wrong?

GAER

- I'm afraid so, Dorothy. I'm kinda desperate and I - I don't know who else to turn to - look at that..

Gaer's looking out toward Roca Botar.

DOROTHY

(really worried now)

- what?

GAER

- the light..

DOROTHY

(somewhere between concern and irritation)

- what light, Kenny?

GAER

- the sunlight - look I thought I could tell you about this even tho I recognize I might sound disturbed, unusually disturbed even tho I'm trying to do the responsible thing -

DOROTHY

Godammit Kenny! Come to the point!..

Fay looks up, shocked.

FAY

Nana, did I do something wrong?

DOROTHY

No, honey - well, Kenny?

GAER

Listen, when was the last time you were out there?

DOROTHY

Out where?



EXT WEBSTER COVE & JETTY ROUNDHOUSE DOROTHY FAY GAER CONTD

GAER

Roca Botar - you know - when you'd go out there like from boarding school and paddle around and..hang out..

He trails off under Dorothy's withering stare.

GAER

..Dorothy, do you happen to remember that dream I was telling you about the other day?..

DOROTHY

Yesterday -

GAER

Yeah, you know - about the -

DOROTHY

- mermaid.

GAER

Right...

He looks back out to sea.

DOROTHY

Kenny, where have you been?

GAER

Out there.

Dorothy glances to the rock and back.

DOROTHY

Dare I ask why? No let me put it this way - were you out there with a mermaid?

GAER

You think you're kidding about that.

DOROTHY

But you're not kidding.

GAER

No.

DOROTHY

You were out there with a mermaid.

GAER

Pretty much - yeah.

EXT WEBSTER COVE & JETTY ROUNDHOUSE DOROTHY FAY GAER CONTD

DOROTHY

Well, how can I help you? Do you want advice or are you merely sharing this experience with me?

GAER

- whatever I'm doing, it comes down to this - we shouldn't blow the rock.

Dorothy looks at him a long moment, something on the jetty seems to draw her attention and she stares off -

GAER

What is it? You see something, Dorothy?

DOROTHY

(turning slowly toward Fay)

Honey, Kenny and I are going to go talk in the jetty house. I want you to stay right on the beach where I can see you, okay?..okay?

FAY

Okay, Nana.

Dorothy looks back to Gaer - and when she alights from the golf cart, stumbles.

GAER

(catching her)

Hey, watch it...

He trails off when he sees how heavily Dorothy's perspiring.

DOROTHY

Let's go, I haven't got all day, Kenny.

EXT GAER & DOROTHY WALK TO THE JETTY HOUSE (DAY)

Dorothy moving ahead of Gaer, shaking her head and mumbling in either irritation or anger.

DOROTHY

- boy oh boy..boy oh boy..

GAER

(opening jetty house door)

Dorothy strides into the tiny circular room with its pools of sunlight from curved windows, an ancient fireplace, and a huge fresco - barely visible in the morning light. She abruptly stops and turns to him.

DOROTHY

You've got a lot of balls, kiddo.

GAER

What am I supposed to say to that, Dorothy? 'no I don't?' I've reconsidered. I think it's a mistake to blow the rock - so does one of the best geologists in the country. What's so ballsy about agreeing with him?

DOROTHY

About agreeing with him? Nothing. But the ocean channel's been unstable from day one - you knew it - you went ahead and jammed the marina right down the coastal commission's throat, you've been absolutely unshakeable about it - until a consultation last night with a mermaid - now that takes balls.

(shouting to Fay outside)

- honey, don't go into the water now -

Dorothy abruptly sits on a couch by the coffee table in front of the fireplace. She bows her head for a moment and then looks up to spot the fresco above the fireplace, and from her vantage point it's visible to CAMERA for the first time - it is of a sailor reaching up from a roiling sea to a rocky plateau beyond his grasp where a lush mermaid suns herself and languidly looks down at the drowning youth and his last, silent plea. The fresco's tantalizingly damaged around the mermaid's head, so her features can't be distinguished clearly. Dorothy turns slowly to Gaer. In a sudden outburst:

DOROTHY

You can't help me and it's humiliating -

GAER

What's humiliating? I don't know what you're talking about.

INT JETTY HOUSE GAER AND DOROTHY CONTD

DOROTHY

Oh come on. Look, Kenny if I wanted to save the rock I wouldn't need a mermaid as an excuse.

GAER

You wouldn't need a mermaid?

DOROTHY

No I wouldn't, no matter what you think.

GAER

What in the hell do I think?

DOROTHY

- my health, my resignation, whatever - I'm frail, I'm senile - I just told you yesterday that as a child I felt Roca Botar was a kind of home to me - and suddenly today you hit me with this 'help a mermaid' business.

GAER

(carefully)

Dorothy you told me how you felt after I told you about the mermaid.

DOROTHY

(highly distraught)

Look, Kenny I don't want to argue about this! Blowing up the rock isn't going to kill me - furthermore ~~it's something of a legend, like the mermaid, my history with Webster Development~~ It's all part of my past and I don't want it around at the expense of Joan's future - so get rid of it. Otherwise Joan's going to be forced to fight me, and that's not fair to her or me - in any case she's more important to me than any rock and I hope to you too. So no more of this mermaid crap, okay honey? It's tough enough.

Gaer has been staring at the silver framed hand tinted photo of a little girl on the coffee table - with her peeling yellow paddleboard, her peeling nose, her turquoise bracelet, and impudent grin. He takes the photo in his hands, seems to be struggling with something.

GAER

- Oh dammit, Dorothy, there's something out there!...

He trails off, helpless.

INT JETTY HOUSE GAER AND DOROTHY CONTD

DOROTHY

What, Kenny? What are you talking about?

Gaer glances up at the fresco. Dorothy sees him do it.

DOROTHY

I'm warning you. No mermaid crap - I concede the point. She's been out there for two hundred years. She's a legend. Okay?

Gaer seems stumped. He looks from fresco to the window, rises still holding the photo in his hands.

GAER

(moving to window)

...look. Look at Fay.

Fay is skittering along the water's edge, giggling with delight and fear as the surf seems to chase her up the beach.

GAER

(looking out at Fay)

- I'm like her, like anybody who loves the ocean. It scares me and I never want to change that - I bet she wouldn't either. Won't she always want to be scared and excited by something out there she can't see? Blowing up that rock kills more than a mermaid - I don't care about your daughter that much, and I hope you don't either...

Gaer looks from the window to the photo in his hands.

DOROTHY

(softly)

Damn you, Kenny..

GAER

(teasing)

Hey, could you answer something for me? I bet you can't.

DOROTHY

Well what is it?

GAER

Come here..come here, come on over here -

INT JETTY HOUSE GAER ADN DOROTHY CONTD

DOROTHY

(shrugs, then:)

- if you guess who stole it..

(Gaer nods, smiling a little

wickedly. Dorothy hesitates:)

..is this a trick?..

(no answer from Gaer)

What the hell, okay - who?

GAER

An otter. A sea otter in the kelp bed.

Dorothy's jaw drops.

DOROTHY

That's not fair, I told you, at some point I had to tell you, or Joan, or somebody - in fact I told Fay about the otter. I even told her if I could ever find it, I wanted her to have it. Did Fay tell you?

GAER

- I'm making the reservations now.

He heads for the phone, picks it up and dials.

GAER

Gee, I can't seem to - Dorothy, there's something wrong with the phone -

JOAN'S VOICE

(shouting)

NOOO.

Gaer stares at the receiver when he hears the voice - Dorothy has heard it as well.

GAER

(putting it to his ear)

- hello?

JOAN'S VOICE

There's nothing wrong with the phone. I happen to be on it, that's all.

GAER

Hi, honey. I thought you were in Sacramento.

JOAN'S VOICE

I am.

INT JETTY HOUSE GAER & DOROTHY CONTD

GAER

Oh - well the phone didn't ring - I was making plane reservations to come up -

JOAN'S VOICE

And I was just calling to say, 'don't bother.' We have the variance.

Gaer suddenly looks shaky.

DOROTHY

What's wrong?

GAER

Joan, do you realize what you're saying?

JOAN'S VOICE

(excited)

Yes. We have it. We have the three hundred slips and permission to detonate Roca Botar right away, well say something!

GAER

..you got Distal's approval?

INT HOTEL ROOM SACRAMENTO JOAN

is sipping champagne in bed, hugging herself with the covers, thoroughly pleased.

JOAN

Oh yes.

GAER'S VOICE

I'm amazed...

JOAN

(looking o.s.)

So was he, actually.

She holds up her glass as she says this - Distal breaks into FRAME from beside her in bed, champagne bottle in hand, and fills her glass - some of it spilling. There are suppressed giggles.

GAER'S VOICE

(halting, stunned)

..you..actually got his approval?

Joan looks to Distal who has heard this. Distal nods vigorously.

INT HOTEL ROOM SACRAMENTO JOAN AND DISTAL CONTD

JOAN

(into phone, blandly)  
Seem to - aren't you going to  
congratulate me, Kenny?

WITH GAER AND DOROTHY IN THE JETTY HOUSE

GAER

(softly)  
..congratulations....yeah, well - see  
you then.

He hangs up and stares at the phone.

GAER

(still staring at the phone,  
quietly)  
- she got the variance. She has  
permission to detonate the rock.

DOROTHY

Well, kiddo. That's that.

GAER

What do you mean?

DOROTHY

I mean the new chairman of Webster  
Development has been heard. I'm history  
around here and I can't tell you how  
happy I am about it. Listen, I want to  
get back to Fay -

She's half out the door.

GAER

Dorothy, it's got to be stopped!

This stops Dorothy. She's framed in the open jetty house  
door.

GAER

..that rock can't be destroyed!..

Dorothy turns slowly back to Gaer.

DOROTHY

Why not?

GAER

Because..I believe what I told you...

DOROTHY

About the mermaid.



INT JETTY HOUSE GAER AND DOROTHY CONTD

Gaer nods. Dorothy glances up at the fresco, out the open door to Fay, then walks back into the jetty house, sits before the fire and sighs.

DOROTHY

I don't know what you think you're doing. Is it a fight with Joan?

GAER

..no.

DOROTHY

Is it work? do you suddenly have some ecological qualms?

DOROTHY

Then what is it?

GAER

(patiently, almost with  
resignation)

The mermaid.

DOROTHY

(looks at him for a long moment)  
Okay. You win. Take a week off, move your mermaid to another rock, any expenses incurred will be absorbed courtesy of Webster Development, now let me out of here -

She rises.

GAER

- I don't know if she can do that, Dorothy. I don't know if she can move her home -

DOROTHY

Oh, please!..why are you doing this?

GAER

(going right on)  
- there's something about the rock itself, when it's destroyed she may be too.

Dorothy has been standing, head bowed as Gaer has gone on. After a moment she looks up.

DOROTHY

(briskly)

Kenny, your troubles are over.

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INT JETTY HOUSE GAER & DOROTHY CONTD

DOROTHY

(contd)

All you have to do is die for her,  
she'll become human, and in the  
last moment of your life you may have  
the satisfaction of knowing you've done  
the best you can for your mermaid.

She stands her ground, glaring at Gaer. Gaer looks back  
for a long moment. Then nods.

GAER

(quietly)

Thanks, Dorothy.

He turns and heads out of the jetty house.

DOROTHY

Where are you going?

Gaer glances at her and smiles slightly - then strides on  
out and back down the jetty. Wind is whipping up spindrift  
and gray shreds of fog across the stone jetty.

MOVING WITH GAER

hunching into the wind, hands thrust in pockets, about  
to move down the stone steps to this Zodiac.

EXT JETTY MOVING WITH GAER CONTD

DOROTHY'S VOICE

Kenny! Kenny!...

Gaer turns to see Dorothy standing in the doorway.

DOROTHY

(shouting)

There hasn't been an otter out there in forty years!

Gaer looks at her, glances over his shoulder at Roca Botar. He turns back to Dorothy, his grim expression softened.

GAER

(calling back)

There was when your picture was taken, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

...but how do you know?...

Gaer stands stock still on one of the wet stone steps of the jetty, hands thrust in pockets staring back. After a long moment he moves down the steps and out of SHOT. The engine of the Zodiac purrs to life and the SOUND begins to move away.

ON DOROTHY'S BACK STANDING IN JETTY DOORWAY

as she watches Gaer and the Zodiac, cutting a wake thru the afternoon gray, heading down the jetty wall toward the open sea and Roca Botar. As it clears the end of the jetty the Zodiac moves off to the right and disappears.

Dorothy turns her head slowly to look up at the fresco. In the gray and gauzy light her profile bears a fleeting resemblance to the mermaid's - then Dorothy leans her head on the door frame, in a tiny gesture of exhaustion and something somewhere between a sigh and a sob escapes from her.

EXT AT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE COVE D-9'S (DAY)

continue their rude and noisy chewing up of real estate in the gray afternoon.

Gaer's Zodiac heads at high speed toward the shore, cutting a sizable wake - the engine however is little more than a fly buzz against the huge caterpillars on the beach.

EXT CONSTRUCTION SITE COVE D-9'S (DAY) CONTD.

WHEN GAER AND ZODIAC

hit the surf line Gaer momentarily gives it full THROTTLE, and with a final burst of speed barrels onto the beach, deftly lifting up the Evinrude motor as he does. He slides to a stop in the sand, ignoring the bulldozer bearing down on him - its driver narrowly averts a collision and is about to yell when he sees it's Gaer - gives a friendly wave instead. Gaer shouts an apology as he rushes up the precipitous and rocky slopes toward the construction trailers, running into his supervisor Broersma as he goes.

BROERSMA

(shouting)

Where the hell you been? Your wife's been all over our ass, she wants that rock blown right away before anybody has a chance to change their mind -

Gaer nods and keeps rushing up the slope indicating for Broersma to follow, who does with a litany of who's in the construction trailer - harbor master, fire chief, etc.

INT CONSTRUCTION SITE TRAILER WITH CHIEF BUDDIE HARBOR  
MASTER ALVERSON ETC

all milling around the marina model and Roca Botar renderings. Gaer bursts in on them.

GAER

Be with you guys in a minute - Martini.

He gestures for Martini who is moving the renderings for Alverson and Budde. Martini follows him into the adjoining bedroom.

GAER

(breathing heavily, trying to speak normally)

- call Mickey Furstman at the San Francisco office of the Environmental Defense Fund - if she's not there, try her at the Oakland office, if she's not there - find her. Call me when you've got her, but don't say she's on the phone -

He doesn't wait for Martini to respond, turns on his heel and leads back into the adjacent room.

IN THE CONSTRUCTION OFFICE GAER

is immediately swallowed up by Harbor Master Alverson who offers congratulations on getting the variance so quickly, and irritation at Gaer's not being available with Joan anxious to get the rock blown in the next forty-eight hours:

ALVERSON

- after all, Kenny I've got to stop all harbor traffic for the day - sports fishing, coast guard, harbor cruises, what the hell give me a break - Joan's been all over us like stink on shit -

GAER

Sorry, Frank, sorry -

BUDDE

(simultaneously with Alverson)  
I want to use gelignite with a radio frequency delay and control the whole operation from shore, how do you feel about that Mr. Gaer?

GAER

- how do I feel? radio frequencies are okay if you've got a controllable band otherwise—excuse me Brad -

This last due to Martini who has poked his head out of the bedroom and indicated to Gaer someone's on the phone. Gaer heads back into the bedroom.

IN THE TRAILER SITE BEDROOM GAER

takes up the phone and indicates to Martini to close the door.

GAER

- Mickey?..yeah listen, honey just tell me one thing - what would you need to obtain a temporary injunction against Webster Development's detonation plans on our marina?...well, we just got the permits, the ocean channel's unstable and we have plans to begin the use of explosives within forty eight hours....

Martini's eyes bug out - Gaer points an accusatory and warning finger at him.

MARTINI

- I didn't say a word.

INT TRAILER SITE BEDROOM GAER AND MARTINI CONTD

GAER

(into phone)

- get the injunction and I'll be your expert witness...

(strangling sounds from Martini)

..you want to know how I got religion or do you want to stop us - get down to the courthouse Mickey, and I'll see you in Sacramento tomorrow afternoon - call me back to confirm after you've filed... I'll explain when I see you

He hangs up

GAER

(to Martini)

You wait here, take her call - get her confirmation and give it to me and me alone. Okay?

Martini nods. Gaer heads on out of the bedroom back into the melee in the adjoining room.

GAER IN ZODIAC CRUISES

thru progressively grayer weather and shrouded skies - patches of fog swallow him, and then he emerges into relatively clear if overcast seas.

GAER'S POV MOVING

into a shredded fog bank.

GAER AND ZODIAC

are a shade in the fog. Once again the fog clears and Gaer brings his small craft into the open.

AHEAD OF HIM

is Roca Botar, a crescent of YELLOW WARNING BUOYS surrounding it, isolating it.

GAER OPENS UP THE THROTTLE

speeding to the buoys, then at the last moment cuts the throttle and picks up the Evinrude again so its props don't become entangled in the line connecting the ring of warning buoys.

After he clears them, he drops the engine and continues to purr along toward the rock at reduced speed, scanning the slate gray ocean for a sign of some life.

GAER GUIDING ZODIAC THRU FOG BY ROCA BOTAR CONTD

As he is yards away from the rock he cuts the throttle so the engine is little more than a hum.

OFF THE PROW

is a FLASH of something in the watery cavern at the base of the chimney. Whether it's merely something in the water or the slap of a swell as it hits the back of the cavern is not certain.

WITH GAER

as he kills the engine to drift into the cavern, its narrow opening at the back, the chimney of gray light above. Sounds like the slapping of water echoes and reverberates eerily. Gaer looks around, wanting to call out but unable to bring himself to do it. He looks down into the water trying to peer beneath its surface - seeing nothing. Gaer does now, however, see the large swell forming at his back, moving on him in the cavern. It HITS, slamming the Zodiac into the stone wall, lifting Gaer and the craft straight up, seemingly certain to bat him from wall to wall in a kind of mini-maelstrom.

In a moment however, Gaer seems suspended above the water. As the swell subsides, Gaer's craft drops back to the surface and he sees the Mermaid floating in the water beneath him.

MERMAID

You'll get hurt here.

She guides the Zodiac out of the cavern to the kelp bed where Gaer ties it up. He hops onto the lower ledge of the rock.

GAER

(turning to Mermaid in water)  
You coming up?

MERMAID

I can see what's happening from here - obviously you can't or won't prevent it -

She starts to move backward as tho she's about to sound.

GAER

I already have!..  
(this slows her down)  
..tomorrow in Sacramento, they'll make sure that nothing is going to happen.

The Mermaid glides back toward the rock slowly.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (DAY) CONTD

MERMAID

How do you know?

Gaer glances at the boxes of equipment on the ledge above - they are marked as PRIMACORD with double XX's and the red warning FLAMMABLE.

GAER

(back to Mermaid)

- it's where they make regulations about what can and can't be done - they've assured me they'll prevent any damage.

MERMAID

To my home?

GAER

Well they don't know it's your home -

MERMAID

But they've promised?

There's a real plea in the question. It clearly affects Gaer. With a show of heartiness:

GAER

Well yeah, sure.

The Mermaid LEAPS out of the water, and slides into Gaer's arms in a quick and fluid move, hugging him as she does:

MERMAID

Oh thank you, thank you ~~for the hug~~  
~~for the hug~~ I've had the most peculiar sensations - maybe it's the way you made me feel ~~different~~ I've wanted to shut my eyes to get away, oh I'm sorry I got you wet -

Gaer has begun to shiver -

GAER

- it's okay, don't worry -

MERMAID

But you're cold -

GAER

- no!..that's not exactly it..

Clearly Gaer is bothered by something. The Mermaid stares at him with growing suspicion.



EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (DAY) CONTD

MERMAID

Then what else?..

GAER

(with difficulty trying to be casual)

- I like seeing you happy, that's all...and I'm going to make certain you will be..always.

The fog has grown heavier and begins to swirl around them now.

MERMAID

(after a moment)

'- always?'

GAER

Well I admit I exaggerate, I'm not going to be around quite that long...

MERMAID

You mean you're going to die?

GAER

One of these days, yeah

MERMAID

Does it bother you?

GAER

- only when I think about it..but listen, it's all part of being human. That little girl who used to visit the rock, the otter grabbed her bracelet -

MERMAID

(remembering, delighted)

Oh, I liked that little girl -

GAER

Well she's old now, and now she tells her granddaughter stories about when she was little and lost a bracelet to a sea otter -

MERMAID

(remembering)

- oh, she cried and cried that day..

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID (DAY) CONTD

GAER

- I'm sure - she even told her granddaughter she'd like her to have that bracelet - when you're human sometimes you hate to lose even little things, you end up losing so much -

MERMAID

(abruptly)

I don't want you to die.

GAER

Listen honey, see what you can do - I'm open to suggestion.

MERMAID

It's not fair..if you can save my life, why can't I save yours?

GAER

You already have - now at least...I want to live as long as I can.

The lower halves of their bodies are now almost entirely obscured in the moving fog bank.

MERMAID

- why now?

GAER

(gazing at her)

..because I could live forever now and it still wouldn't be enough time..

MERMAID

Enough time?..to do what?

GAER

..oh, look at you, mainly. What the hell - exclusively. No point in bet hedging now, face it. I could look at you forever and it still wouldn't be enough time - and that's a promise I'd keep.

The Mermaid's hand slowly moves to her breast and she draws back, almost disappearing into fog.

MERMAID

(very quietly)

You mean..there are promises you wouldn't keep?

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID IN FOG CONTD

Her luminous eyes shine thru the fog as she watches him closely.

GAER

(after a painful pause)

- couldn't...keep. But this one's up to me, just me...

There's unmistakable apology and even grief in Gaer's tone. The Mermaid stares back steadfastly. Then she smiles and in a sweet little gesture taps Gaer's wrist, almost a gesture of reassurance or forgiveness. Gaer's eyes well up with tears as tho he'd just been bopped on the nose. The Mermaid's amazed.

GAER

(trying to keep from coming unglued)

- just..don't look at me...just not for a minute, okay?...

Gaer turns away, not able to bear it. In a moment the Mermaid's hand breaks into FRAME, her fingers reaching for Gaer's mouth. With a tiny little gestuyre they flick at his lips, suggesting he open them and before he can, the fingers ease across the mouth and parted lips. Now Gaer is astonished.

MERMAID'S VOICE

Bite my hand?

GAER

(fascinated, not moving)

How hard?

MERMAID

As hard as you want.

Gaer lets her baby finger and the side of her hand slide across his lips, then grabs her wrist. He glances across at the Mermaid and a flicker of rage momentarily lights up his face. Then he looks back down at the Mermaid's hand, his parted lips half-closing in what is nearly a kiss, but not quite.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID IN FOG CONTD

THE MERMAID

watches Gaer without moving herself, frozen with fascination and a little fear. She winces when it's clear that the off screen Gaer has bitten into her hand. She continues to tremble, eyes half-closed as the bite apparently goes on. Just as the pain seems intense enough to make her cry out:

GAER'S FACE AND LIPS

draw back, hovering in shreds of gray fog over her hand and arm. He then delicately and deliberately kisses her wrist - then with equal deliberation moves up her arm, to her shoulders, her hair, her cheeks, her mouth, her ears, her neck, her breasts -

GAER

(as he does)

- how about wherever I want?..  
whenever I want?...for as long as I  
want?...would you like that?...

MERMAID

...yes...I'd like that..

Her lips are parted, eyes squeezed tightly shut, skin flushed, its opalescent surface almost glowing with pink light. The Mermaid suddenly trembles violently.

MERMAID

- no!

She shoves Gaer away. Her violent spasm subsides into shivering.

MERMAID

(quietly)

Are you trying to hurt me?

GAER

(astonished)

- no.

MERMAID

(almost a whisper)

You're trying to hurt me.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID IN FOG CONTD

Gaer looks at her for an uncertain moment. Then:

GAER

Honey, this isn't the way I try to do that, honestly. Why do you keep saying it?

MERMAID

..because...I don't want to stop feeling like this and..I know I'll have to and - it hurts too much...

Gaer nods slowly.

GAER

Want me to stop?

The Mermaid immediately shakes her head.

MERMAID

- no.

Gaer wraps his arms around her and begins to kiss her again, half lost in fog and her breasts, moving down them to her belly to:

HER OPALESCENT NAVEL

mother of pearl, the color of an abalone shell - and about as penetrable. It brings Gaer up short. He rises shakily and stares off into space.

GAER

Oh God, come on - this is such an old joke....

Gaer begins to laugh, and when he sees the Mermaid looking at him:

GAER

(still laughing)

- honey, it's not your fault, nobody's perfect, the joke's on me -

A swell hits, the Mermaid grabs Gaer and they are both SLAMMED into the back of the ledge, then tumble forward in the foam into a shallow tide pool. The Mermaid looks down at Gaer.

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID IN FOG CONTD

MERMAID

What can I do that would please  
you?..aren't there other ways to make  
love?

She touches his forehead tentatively.

GAER

- well - yeah...

MERMAID

Could you show me?

GAER

(tentative himself)

..yeah...

MERMAID

- let me please you?..  
(she sees Gaer almost inadvertantly  
glance back down at her navel)  
- does it matter all that much?

GAER

Well - ideally I think it's one of those  
things you should have with you at all  
times -

(he pats her navel)

- like an American Express Card. You  
know, 'don't leave home without it', oh  
hell!..

He trails off. The Mermaid slides away from him.

GAER

- where you going?

MERMAID

I don't want to disappoint you -

Gaer catches her before she reaches the edge.

GAER

- I'd rather die than make you feel like  
that. Don't leave, don't ever leave,  
I'm in love with you - do you understand  
what that means?

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID IN FOG CONTD

MERMAID

(in his arms)

Not..really..

Gaer nods.

GAER

To be perfectly truthful, neither does anybody else..but it's..what you say when you feel too much to say anything else.

He searches the Mermaid's face for a reaction. Then:

MERMAID

- I just know that I'm not so sure about this place anymore...maybe you shouldn't save it..

GAER

Are you kidding? why?

MERMAID

I'm not so sure I want to live..without you..and I'd have to - forever...I couldn't do that...

She has said this last to herself. Before Gaer can do anything more she breaks out of his grasp and hurls herself into the gray fog, disappearing. In a moment there's a splash.

GAER

No!

He's hit with a wave rolling out of the fog and it slams him around. He grips the ledge, drenched, and rises to peer intently into the gray shroud, moving to the very edge, looking and listening for any sign of life in the fog. Another wave breaks and Gaer has to hold onto the back of the ledge. As the surf subsides Gaer sinks back down to the ledge, water dripping slowly off the end of his nose.

In a moment there's the SOUND of a foghorn. Gaer looks up and looming out of the gray is the Fire Chief's shore patrol boat, with Chief Budde aboard. It glides right alongside Gaer.

BUDDE

Are you all right, Mr. Gaer?

GAER

What're you doing here, Brad?

EXT ROCA BOTAR GAER AND CHIEF BUDDE IN FOG CONTD

BUDDE

(I was going to ask you that. Me, I'm going to spot placements for the dynamite - you want to start drilling tomorrow, don't you?

Gaer looks at Budde and is unable to answer.

EXT NEWPORT ISLE GAER & JOAN'S CONTEMPORARY HOME GAER

pulls into a garage using a remote control clicker - a home around the crescent of a carefully manicured cul de sac, surrounded by other expensive homes that were all built at the same time, having sprung from this lush little islet like lush weeds.

Gaer closes the garage door, and heads into the house thru the kitchen, wearing the same clothes he'd been dressed in at Roca Botar, except for a sportcoat instead of the Mighty Mac.

ON THE SUNDECK OVERLOOKING BALBOA BAY JOAN & FRIENDS

sit in a hot tub, in the gray twilight, sipping champagne and listening to music from speakers on the deck. Two attractive women are in the hot tub with Joan, and the husband of one of the women sits in shorts and matching shirt drinking a Bloody Mary on the deck.

Gaer's greeted by everyone - clearly they are neighbors he knows. They offer congratulations, champagne, etc.

GAER

- thanks - I've got to confirm some reservations, I'll be back in a minute -

JOAN

What reservations?

GAER

(trying to get back into the house)  
- I can tell you later, Joan -

JOAN

I'd like to know now.

GAER

I'm going to Sacramento tomorrow.

JOAN

What the hell for? It's done. I did it. It's taken care of. Finished.



EXT SUNDECK GAER'S HOME GAER JOAN & NEIGHBORS CONTD

GAER

That's why I'm going to Sacramento tomorrow - I don't think we should dynamite Roca Botar and I'm going up there to say so.

(the phone starts to ring)

Excuse me, I should get that.

He leaves Joan with her champagne glass tilted in the air, a half smile on her face. The phone continues to ring. When it stops:

JOAN

(to her guests)

Excuse me -

She climbs out of the hot tub, wearing a slender bikini and wearing it well. She throws on a terry cloth robe.

INT GAER AND JOAN'S HOUSE BEDROOM GAER

with back to CAMERA is on the phone. Joan approaches from behind, stalks from behind, is actually more appropriate:

JOAN

(spitting it out)

- all right, what in the fuck is this all about, and I want an answer now.

Without turning Gaer raises his right hand - for silence.

JOAN

- no. I don't care who you're talking to -

Gaer turns. With the phone still in his ear:

GAER

(quietly)

Shut up Joan, and put on some clothes - we've got to get out of here.

(he hangs up phone as Joan stares blankly at him:)

- I said put on some clothes.

IN DOROTHY WEBSTER'S LIVING ROOM GAER

sits with Maynard, both absently watching the gardener trimming the bougainvillea. Gaer and Maynard glance uneasily at one another, look away.

INT WEBSTER'S LIVING ROOM GAER MAYNARD CONT

JOAN AND NANCY

- Joan hastily pulled together in jeans and sweater -  
emerge from the direction of Dorothy's bedroom, both  
looking chastened somehow.

GAER

(rising, to both)  
How is she?

Joan shrugs.

NANCY

Who knows? I didn't think anything was  
wrong to begin with -

Dr. McWilliams follows the two women.

MCWILLIAMS

Mr. Gaer, Mrs. Webster would like a  
moment with you - and please - try not  
to make it longer than that.

Gaer glances uneasily at Joan and Nancy, then heads on back  
toward Dorothy's bedroom.

GAER ENTERS DOROTHY'S BEDROOM WITH DOROTHY

lying back on a pillow, eyes half closed, a bed tray  
resting over her nearly inert body.

Gaer bends down and kisses her, then sits on the bed.  
Dorothy opens her eyes slowly, lazily.

DOROTHY

..what's that for?..

GAER

(a slow silky smile)  
- you know what it does to me when you  
don't wear makeup, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

(dreamily)  
- why'd you wait til now to tell me?

There's an o.s. noise of clumping from the closet. Gaer  
looks toward it.

DOROTHY

- it's Fay...messing around with my  
clothes - What did Dr. McWilliams tell  
you? Don't lie to me.

INT DOROTHY'S BEDROOM GAER AND DOROTHY CONTD

Gaer looks at Dorothy, then sees he's nearly sitting on a spoonful of yogurt that had fallen off the tray. He picks it up.

GAER

..just..that you're, you know - ill and it's...a serious illness - serious but not critical -

(indicating spoonful of yogurt)  
- what's this?

DOROTHY

(shrugs)

- for the antibiotic. Well he lied.  
It's critical but not serious.

Gaer looks at her - taps the yogurt off the spoon, fills it up with fresh yogurt and poises it just outside her mouth.

DOROTHY

(staring at spoon)  
What the hell are you doing?

GAER

Open up.

DOROTHY

No.

Gaer adroitly works the spoon into her mouth, and deposits the yogurt.

DOROTHY

(screwing up her face)  
Yuck...Joan's really going to need help now so stick around -

(Gaer starts to protest)  
- come on, no nonsense.

GAER

Okay - but I am running up to Sacramento tomorrow - and Joan will not consider that helpful.

FAY

Nana, Nana, how's this? It's so cute, isn't it?

Fay has come to the closet door wearing a pink blouse as a dress, and clomping in high heels of Dorothy's.

DOROTHY

Yes, honey, it is.

INT DOROTHY'S BEDROOM GAER DOROTHY, FAY CONTD

Fay nods and heads back to try out another outfit. Dorothy smiles and turns to Gaer, then stares off into space.

DOROTHY

..what do you do about it?

GAER

About what?

DOROTHY

Making love..how do you make love to a mermaid? Oh, please, no -

GAER

(giving her another spoonful which she's protesting)

Don't ask me -

DOROTHY

Come on, Kenny everybody wants the answer to that - what do you do, go where they spawn?

GAER

Dammit Dorothy...

DOROTHY

Well, does she know how you feel at least?

Gaer nods, shrugs.

GAER

She's a mermaid.

DOROTHY

So? Don't do it again. I'll spit it all over you, I swear...

Gaer lowers the spoonful of yogurt

GAER

(suddenly)

- I'm in love with her. I'd give anything to know what she feels, to know if she can feel it too - but if she's not human....

He trails off, helpless.

DOROTHY

(gently)

I'm sure it's highly disturbing.

INT DOROTHY'S BEDROOM GAER DOROTHY FAY CONTD

GAER

It's driving me nuts.

DOROTHY

Well don't do anything dumb, Kenny.

GAER

Like what?

DOROTHY

Die for her - she'd know you love her then, she'd be human then. But you'd be dead - Oh Kenny -

GAER

(watching her steadily)

What hon?

DOROTHY

Wouldn't it be nice if there really were such things as Mermaids?

GAER

(watching her steadily)

..yeah -

DOROTHY

(very dreamy)

Right about now I wouldn't mind..being one...

Her eyes half close as tho she's trying to imagine it.

Dorothy's eyes seem to close fully. Gaer watches her for a moment, then rises from the bed, lifting the tray to take with him.

As he turns with it, he catches Fay's reflection in the full length mirror on the closet door - dressed now in a black chiffon blouse, with black pumps and a black hat.

Fay sees Gaer thru the mirror and waves. Gaer is momentarily arrested by the image of Fay in black, then manages a nod to her reflection, turns and leaves Dorothy lying alone, breathing softly, a slight smile on her face. As he opens the door and turns around to move thru it with the tray he catches Dorothy with one eye a little more open than the other, giving him one last wink as he leaves.

INT SACRAMENTO HEARING ROOM GAER FACING JOAN

sits before the Coastal Commission Hearing Committee, next to the EDF lawyer Mickey Furstman, an attractive athletic young woman.

The audience of some fifty or sixty consists of lawyers for WDC, environmentalists, Cal Tech geologists, labor leaders and one active t.v. camera crew, whispering about the husband-wife face off.

FURSTMAN

(at her mic)

- I fail to comprehend, Mrs. Gaer, Mr. Gaer is your project manager, and he does appear to have supportive data that coincides with the Cal Tech Geology report - any detonation of Roca Botar could cause a disastrous sediment shift in the ocean channel -

JOAN IN DARK SUIT GRABS THE MIC

from her own lawyers.

JOAN

Because Mr. Gaer accepts the Cal Tech thesis does not mean that Webster Development does.

FURSTMAN

- aside from being your husband, he is your project manager, Mrs. Gaer -

Joan starts to speak, but her lawyer covers the mic with his hand, and they go into heated colloquy.

The leading attorney breaks away, approaches Distal and whispers something to him.

DISTAL

(after a moment, highly embarrassed)

Mr. Gaer, it seems you are no longer authorized to speak as a representative of Webster Development - you've been relieved as project manager.

GAER

Only the board chairman can do that.

INT SACRAMENTO HEARING ROOM GAER DISTAL FURSTMAN JOAN ET AL  
CONTD

JOAN

(taking the mic from her lawyer,  
icily)

- Mr. Gaer has my assurance and my  
lawyers' that I am here as Chairman pro  
tem of Webster Development and as such  
have full authority to act on its  
behalf.

The television camera is covering this, moving in - and  
there's considerable buzzing in the room over this combined  
domestic squabble and corporate conflict.

GAER

nods, rises and walks over to Distal who shrugs,  
helplessly.

DISTAL

(whispering to Gaer)  
- who'd she catch you in bed with?  
She's mad, Kenny.

GAER

(nods, whispering back)  
- how about my speaking as a concerned  
citizen?

Distal smiles wryly. Then whispers:

DISTAL

Sure. Long as you know how much good  
that's gonna do - and don't blame me.

Gaer nods, sad and amused. He returns to his seat, placing  
his hand over the mic and whispering to Furstman:

GAER

Joan's gonna blow this rock come hell or  
high water at four o'clock this  
afternoon - we're gonna get nowhere with  
the injunction in the district court,  
right?

Furstman nods.

DISTAL

Mr. Gaer will continue his testimony as  
an expert witness on behalf of the Cal  
Tech report..Mr. Gaer?

INT SACRAMENTO HEARING ROOM GAER JOAN ET AL CONTD

GAER

(taking hand away from mic)

- in just a moment, Senator -
- (replacing hand on mic)
- better chance on appeal?

Furstman nods again.

GAER

- okay, I'm gonna make some environmental plea which no one will listen to, and then get outta here and keep that thing from being blown while you file the appeal, okay?

FURSTMAN

You got a lot of balls, Kenny.

GAER

(mildly surprised)

For doin' this?

FURSTMAN

For being married to her.

Gaer sheepishly nods recognition if not agreement.

EXT SACRAMENTO AIRPORT BRILES HELICOPTER SERVICE

a small building and heliport at the corner of one of the larger runways.

GAER ON A PUBLIC PHONE DIALS

then puts one hand over the ear away from the phone to block out the helicopters.

GAER

(as phone is answered)

Ned? Listen I've chartered a plane, I'll be landing at John Wayne Airport and this is urgent I need -

Gaer's stopped by Huggins shouting something. He suddenly grows very quiet, listening to Huggins who can't be clearly heard because of the incessant helicopter buzz. As the HELICOPTER SOUNDS overwhelm everything:



POV MOVING HELICOPTER APPROACHING ROCA BOTAR

at about five hundred feet, steadily dropping as it moves over a flat pan of pale blue sea, puny splinters of sunlight reflecting off it. Shreds of fog thicken as:

ROCA BOTAR IS DIRECTLY BELOW

and final preparations for dynamiting go on - the white web of primacord zig-zags over the surface, workmen are already dropping into little bobbing Zodiacs to head to waiting Coast Guard boats. Someone turns on a DETONATOR light on the summit. It winks an intermittent malevolent green.

GAER LOOKS DOWN AND BACK

as the shreds of fog continue to thicken and encircle the rock.

AHEAD IS THE WEBSTER COVE SHORE LINE

seeming to rush at CAMERA as the copter descends to see the growing number of fire and communications trucks - as ship-to-shore contact directing the blast is underway. Spectators have begun to gather.

GAER LOOKS DOWN TO THE LAWN OF THE WEBSTER HOME & COMPOUND

as the helicopter descends to land - it all looks serene and quiet - except for an unusual number of cars and limos on the gravel crescent - the power mower is abandoned in the center of the lawn, the bright parasol partially collapsed.

THE HELICOPTER TOUCHES THE LAWN AND GAER

alights, ducking under the rotors and after a brief glance at the waiting Huggins - into his arms. The two men hug, Gaer hanging on to Huggins, their voices lost in the whirling rotor blades as the copter ascends again.

Gaer and Huggins slowly move toward the house.

INT WEBSTER LIVING ROOM GAER

leans on the fireplace mantle, Huggins sitting beneath and on the phone. Nancy is beside him, Fay playing quietly on the floor. A maid offers Gaer coffee which he takes and shakily sips.

GAER

(to Nancy)

- I don't know if Joan's even heard,  
Nancy - I just dropped the phone and  
chartered a plane - sorry.

INT WEBSTER LIVING ROOM GAER HUGGINS NANCY CONTD

Nancy shakes her head, 'don't be'. She touches Gaer.

NANCY

Well - you want to go in?

Gaer looks shocked, then down to Huggins who is still on the phone quietly arguing. He looks back to Nancy.

IN FRONT OF DOROTHY'S BEDROOM DOOR GAER

hesitates, then opens it.

DOROTHY LIES IN BED

her upper body is in shadow, her left hand dangles over the bed. One of the doors to the veranda is open and a breeze flutters thru the curtain, touching Dorothy's hair.

GAER

moves uncertainly toward the bed, his eyes on Dorothy. As he moves beside the bed, he looks down. A sudden surge of breeze from the veranda ruffles the spread, moving a portion of it away from Dorothy's left arm, exposing the hand and wrist. Gaer has to look for a long moment at what he sees:

THE TURQUOISE AND GOLD BRACELET

identical to the one in the Mermaid's vision and in the photograph - so loose on the child's wrist and so snug on Dorothy's wrist now - gleams even in the shadows.

INT LIVING ROOM GAER WITH NANCY AND FAY

holds the turquoise and gold bracelet, listening to Nancy.

NANCY

Fay said some girl gave it to her on the beach, and she brought it to mother just an hour or so before -

She doesn't finish.

GAER

What kind of girl? What kind of girl?

FAY

A girl in the water - she said it was Nana's -

GAER

Was Nana awake when you gave it to her?

INT LIVING ROOM GAER NANCY FAY CONTD

Fay looks nowhere in particular, nods.

GAER

Did Nana say anything?

Fay shakes her head.

FAY

(then)

- 'thank you'...and said you should say  
'thank you' too.

GAER

I should say thank you?

Fay nods.

NANCY

Who should Kenny thank?

Gaer kneels down.

GAER

(to Nancy)

Never mind - I have an idea -

(to Fay)

I happen to know your Nana wanted you to  
have this -

Gaer takes the turquoise and gold bracelet and pinches it  
carefully around Fay's wrist.

GAER

- promise me something? Fay, look at  
me, please.

(Fay looks, a little surprised by  
the tone)

Never lose it...someday when you're a  
Nana, you can give it to a little girl  
too, okay?

FAY

You're making me shy.

GAER

Okay?

FAY

..okay.

Gaer gives her a quick kiss, rises and moves to Huggins who  
is sitting with the doctor on the raised fireplace hearth,  
drink in hand, phone in ear.

INT LIVING ROOM GAER HUGGINS ET AL CONTD

GAER

(quietly)

Ned, I've got to leave. Do me a favor. Keep calling Fire Chief Budde and tell him if the Coast Guard doesn't abort that damn explosion, somebody on the rock's gonna die -

HUGGINS

(mildly shocked)

Who?

GAER

Me, for one..

Gaer looks up - the wall clock reads 2:37.

GAER

- you've got eighty-three minutes, or I do -

Gaer heads swiftly out the door.

HUGGINS

Kenny!...

EXT WEBSTER COVE FIRE ORDNANCE PREVENTION CREW AND TRUCKS

assembled on the bluff, amber lights rotating lazily through the growing shroud of fog. A heavy gray bank begins to envelop Roca Botar in the distance. The winking green light is echoed by a winking green light on the FIVE CHANNEL SAFETY BOARD next to the radio phoneman.

Crackling over the phone the Coast Guard Commander can be heard expressing concern over the looming fog bank. The winking green safety light goes off. The lavender light next to it on the SAFETY BOARD begins to blink - and is answered by a lavender light on the rock.

Somewhere below in the cove by the fog-shrouded landing an outboard motor kicks over a couple of times, then starts up and purrs off. One of the firemen looks up from some paperwork, mildly puzzled at the sound.

THRU THE FOG THE OUTLINE

of a Zodiac planing can be seen.

POV OF A HUGE COAST GUARD CUTTER LOOMING

thru the gray shroud. CAMERA ABRUPTLY SWINGS LEFT. As CAMERA CLEARS the dark hull, the light of Roca Botar, seeming to float in the fog, can be glimpsed. The blinking light is now AMBER.

AT THE BASE OF ROCA BOTAR

a surge of kelp and sea gently rolls into some of the lower lines of white primacord webbing, the amber light still blinking. Gaer's Zodiac, its engine cut, GLIDES INTO SHOT. Very much like the young Dorothy, he grabs some kelp and secures the boat with it - then grabs some primacord - and gingerly pulls himself onto the rock. He slips - grabs the cord. It strains. He winces - pulls his legs out of the water and crawls onto the rock - working his way under the first few lines of cord as if they're some sort of barbed wire.

INT THE WEBSTER LIVING ROOM HUGGINS AND MAYNARD

face one another, Huggins holding the phone between them. B.g. Joan is on a couch, leaning on her sister Nancy's shoulder, her face buried in Nancy's neck. The wall clock reads 3:29.

HUGGINS

(calmly)

They want a guarantee of written authorization by a family member before they'll risk aborting the operation...

(indicating Joan and Nancy)

- and they're in no shape to give it.

MAYNARD

Well don't expect it from me. It's insane - utterly impractical.

HUGGINS

Kenny'll be killed out there.

MAYNARD

I don't believe it for a minute.

Huggins nods. He pulls Maynard a little further from the two grieving sisters.

HUGGINS

(confiding)

..I hope you'll believe this, Maynard - if you don't you'll be killed right here.

EXT WEBSTER COVE CREW CHIEF BUDDE

with his dashingy furry face listening on the radio phone. The amber light on the panel is flashing at his back. He nods deferentially to the unseen speaker.

EXT WEBSTER COVE CREW CHIEF BUDDE CONTD

BUDDE

- yes sir, we're doing everything we can and we will do everything we can. Furthermore Mr. Gaer's well familiar with gelignite and can work with it..yes sir, we've scrubbed our radio detonating frequency but I'm not sending my men out there in this kind of cloud cover to remove explosives - we won't blow it, but that don't mean something won't -

He hangs up.

BUDDE

(to everyone and no one)  
- if Gaer gets blown to shit I'm not taking the rap - a stray pelican, the music of your life, a model airplane - it's dynamite out there boys, and dynamite is dynamite.

Budde shakes his head. The blinking amber light goes OFF. The final light on the SAFETY PANEL, a steady RED, goes on.

IN THE FOG ON ROCA BOTAR GAER

makes his way toward the red detonating light high on the rock, carefully avoiding the white primacord.

AT THE SUMMIT IS THE DETONATOR AND TIMER

Gaer, a pair of hands and a head in the fog kneels into SHOT.

THE DETONATOR AND TIMER

read 3:43, the seconds ticking down. Gaer's hands begin checking lead lines. In one hand he holds a knife - begins to cut one lead line, shakily unscrews another.

The Mermaid begins to shine thru the fog by Gaer. She watches, luminous and pulsating but barely more than rainbow mist around him. Gaer doesn't see her while he feverishly works on the timer.

GAER'S CUTTERS

Carefully snip into a blue lead line, SNAPPING it. When they do and the blue line is cut, a yellow lead line is revealed beneath it - one he has knicked. The yellow line begins to BREAK open.

GAER SEES IT

winces, goes to grab the yellow lead line but before he can:

ROCA BOTAR GAER AND MERMAID CONTD

THE TIMERS FACE

goes from 3:49 to a BLANK. A shrill KLAXON begins to beep. The timer's face moves to :15 and with each beep a count down begins :14, :13, :12, etc.

GAER

frantically tries to reposition the yellow lead line.

THE MERMAID MATERIALIZES

around him in the fog, pulling him back from the detonator. Gaer turns, shocked to find himself in her arms.

GAER

(shouting over Klaxon)

- I've only got a few seconds - you'll die!..

She looks another moment.

THE TIMER

is at :05.

THE MERMAID GRIPS GAER

tightly and HURTLES into the fog, backlit now with a red hue.

THEIR BODIES SPLASH INTO THE GRAY SURFACE

of the sea.

MOVING THRU FOGGY WATER THE MERMAID SURFACES

with Gaer gasping in her arms, dodging bits of flotsam and jetsam, Coast Guard markers, etc.

A BELLBUOY SUDDENLY TAKES SHAPE

looming before them in the fog.

GAER'S VOICE

- no.

CAMERA SWERVES, but caroms off the bellbuoy which sways wildly. The bell RINGS and reverberates like a tuning fork and:

A RADIO OSCILLOSCOPE

on one of the cutters has its sine waves SHATTERED into random glitches.

ALL THE SAFETY CHANNELS ON THE RADIO TRUCK  
glimmer.

CHIEF BUDDE

turns to it.

BUDDE

Holy shit, look at that.

THE PRIMACORD ON ROCA BOTAR VIBRATES AND HUMS

ROCA BOTAR EXPLODES

across the screen.

THE BELLBUOY

is lifted off the surface of the sea.

MERMAID'S OUTLINE

can be glimpsed thru the exploding gray mass.

THE FOG IS FILLED

with flying debris.

UNDERWATER

the sea rolls with the impact of the explosion. As the debris begins to settle, rock, and dead bits of sea life can be glimpsed.

THE BELLBUOY IN FOG

bobs back and forth - its little bell plaintive in the explosion's aftermath. Bits of rock and falling debris can be heard splashing thru the fog.

GAER CRAWLS ONTO THE BELLBUOY

and begins to haul the Mermaid up as well. As he does the bellbuoy floats into fog and the two are barely more than outlines.

MERMAID

(shivering)

..I'm so cold..

Gaer can be glimpsed moving as tho he's wrapping his arms around her.



MERMAID AND GAER FLOATING IN FOG CONTD

With fog horns and boat whistles intermittently blasting their presence in the soupy fog DISSOLVE TO:

A FLEET OF SAILING BOATS FILL THE SEA

like a flock of birds on the wind, their white sails spread, all of them heeling before the same invisible force.

There are SOUNDS of sailing - of wind in the rigging and shouts of men - the squeaks and moans of changing breezes, and slapping hulls on waves - all of them beginning to sound like the stress of a ship bent to its limits under full sail - or of a woman under the penultimate stress of intense lovemaking - all as CAMERA begins a slow move into the fleet.

As it does it ISOLATES ONE SAILING SHIP, unlike the countless ones around it - heeling and appearing to bend to the breaking point in the white capped seas and heady wind - it takes a leisurely and nearly upright course heading directly toward CAMERA, which heads directly toward it, until CAMERA is at the water line of the bow as the hull SLAPS with relentless if casual force into each roll of the sea - and the nautical moans of men and ships at sea become the protracted ecstasy of one woman making love.

As CAMERA appears about to break thru the hull of the ship and move inside, a huge warning horn BLOWS and:

GAER IN HIS STATEROOM

nearly rolls off the bed - which has itself already rolled onto the stateroom floor where he and the Mermaid - whose lovely legs are locked around him in a state of post-coital ecstasy and generally magnificent deshabelle.

GAER

(listening)

- honey!

MERMAID

(eyes closed)

..what honey?..

GAER

(looking at her legs which are  
locked around his middle)

- you gotta let me up. I think we're  
gonna run into somebody.

MERMAID

- as long as we won't have to stop, who  
cares?

INT OF GAER'S YACHT'S STATEROOM GAER AND MERMAID CONTD

Gaer shrugs.

GAER

- okay honey.

He kisses her and there is a SLOW FADE, during which there is the unmistakable SOUND of a COLLISION:

COMPLETE FADE TO:

SOMETHING BLACK FILLING THE SCREEN

which moves AWAY from CAMERA. As it does the name MERMAID glides into frame, the letters painted on the starboard side of her narrow stern.

THE WHITE SAIL SNAPS AND BILLOWS

and MERMAID HEELS, its startling black hull nearly dipping its gunwales into the sea.

MERMAID UNDER FULL SAIL

cuts thru the sea, spewing foam, slicing with almost animal-like ease thru the green sea.

GAER AT THE WHEEL AND HUGGINS

near the spinnaker, exchange pleased glances.

THE MERMAID

has been watching from the companionway. She's wearing one of Gaer's shirts. Her lovely legs are showing and so is she - she's definitely pregnant.

GAER

looks at her and seems to be a little bothered.

MERMAID

(coming to him)

- honey, don't worry, it's going to be a boy or a girl, nothing else..

GAER

(you know just the right things to say)

Aw, honey...

Both laugh, look at one another a moment and then their gaze somehow travels upward to:

THE WINDFILLED SPINNAKER

looking like it will hold the wind forever.

THE END